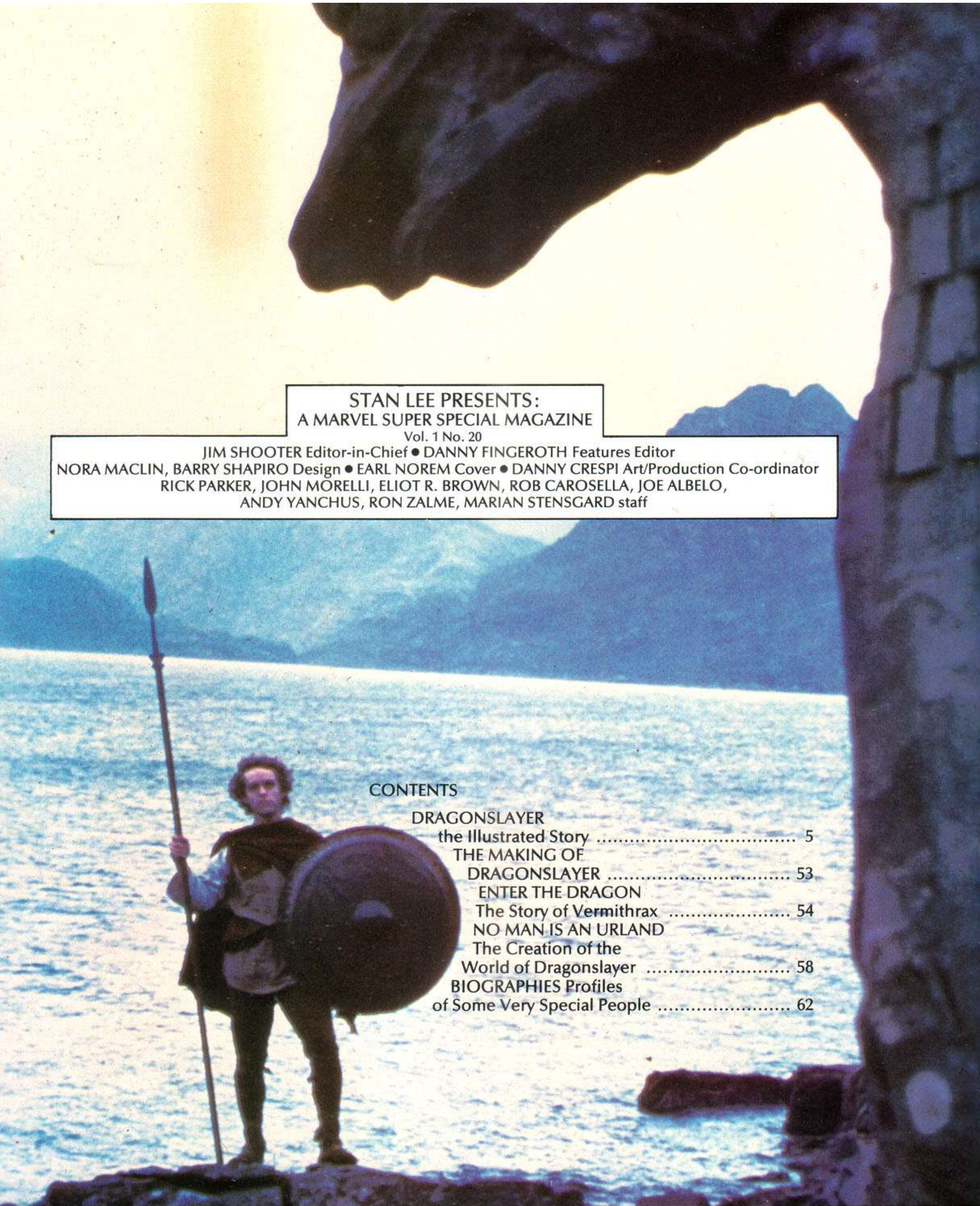
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A MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL MAGAZINE

Nº 20

DRAGONSLAYER™





STAN LEE PRESENTS:
A MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL MAGAZINE
Vol. 1 No. 20

JIM SHOOTER Editor-in-Chief • DANNY FINGEROTH Features Editor
NORA MACLIN, BARRY SHAPIRO Design • EARL NOREM Cover • DANNY CRESPI Art/Production Co-ordinator
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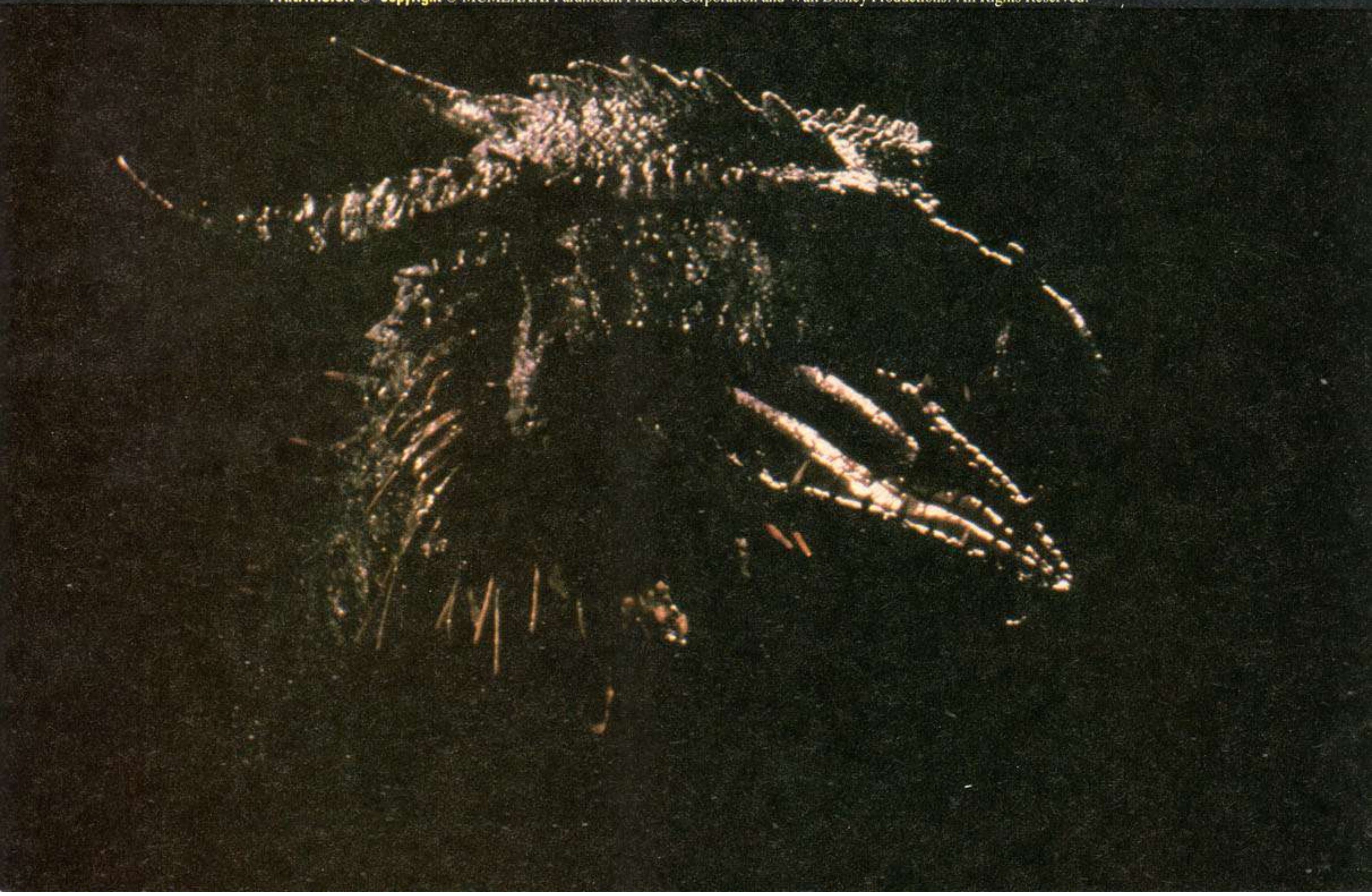
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PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION
AND WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS PRESENT
A BARWOOD-ROBBINS PRODUCTION

DRAGONSLAYER™

Executive producer HOWARD W. KOCH
Written by HAL BARWOOD & MATTHEW ROBBINS
Produced by HAL BARWOOD
Directed by MATTHEW ROBBINS





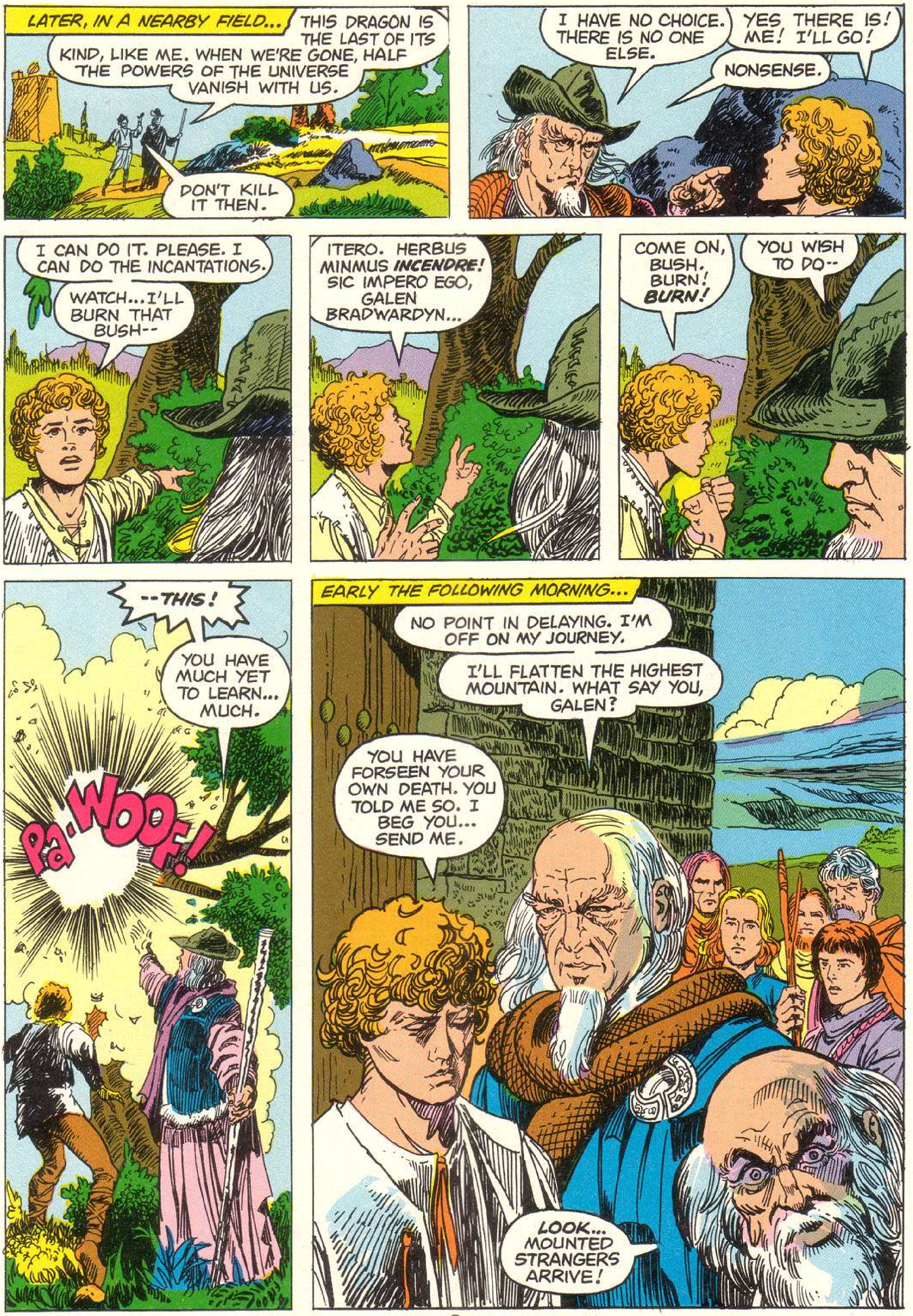


THEY ARE DIRE, THESE VISIONS WHICH TORMENT THE OLD MAN, AND SEEING THEM HE FEELS THE AIR OF THE CONJURING CHAMBER GROW CHILL AND HEAVY AROUND HIM...
PERHAPS HE WISHES HE LACKED THIS TERRIBLE POWER--THE POWER TO GLIMPSE THE FUTURE. IF SO, THIS IS IN VAIN.
FOR HE IS ULRICH--MAGISTER IPSISSMUS--SEER, ENCHANTER, MASTER OF ALL MAGIC AND HE IS THE LAST OF HIS KIND.
--THE LAST EVER.
IT IS THE SIXTH CENTURY, AND THE DAYS OF THE MAGICIANS ARE NUMBERED, AND THE NUMBER IS SMALL...
DENNIS O'NEIL Script MARIE SEVERIN Pencils & Colors JOHN TARTAGLIONE Inks JIM SHOOTER Editor


IT IS NOT TO BE AVOIDED...THE MONSTER WILL RISE FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH...
...AYE, FIERCELY WILL THE BEAST COME TO BRING DESTRUCTION...
GALEN!
GALEN BRADWARDYN! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, LISTENING AT THE MASTER'S DOOR! GET AWAY FROM THERE.
I'M SORRY, HODGE.
YOUNG WHELP... MASTER ULRICH'S APPRENTICE SHOULD HAVE MORE RESPECT.
DESTRUCTION AND GREAT SLAUGHTER...
AT THAT MOMENT...
THERE IT IS-- CRAGGANMORE, HOUSE OF ULRICH.
I PRAY HE WILL BE ABLE TO HELP US.
HOWEVER...
NO, HE WON'T SEE YOU. HE'S IN RETREAT. HE SEES NO ONE. NOT LORD NOR LOUT. NO ONE.
PLEASE--
HEAR ME, YOU WHO DWELL IN CRAGGANMORE. WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY AND WE'RE NOT GOING BACK. WE WILL STAY HERE UNTIL WE ARE HEARD.
THEN...
WE...WE HAVE VISITORS.
I KNOW. I WILL SEE THEM.
YOU WILL?



YES. THEY COME ON A MATTER OF SOME CONSEQUENCE. MY DEATH.
YOUR... DEATH?
BALISARIUS WORE THIS HEADGEAR BEFORE HE DIED. I ACTUALLY SAW HIM CHANGE LEAD INTO GOLD.
I NEVER COULD DO THAT.
SOON, IN THE RECEPTION HALL, A PUFF OF SMOKE, AND--
HARK TO MASTER ULRICH!
WELCOME TO CRAGGANMORE. WHICH ONE OF YOU CALLS HIMSELF VALERIAN?
THAT WOULD BE ME. WE ARE FROM URLAND, BEYOND DELVATIA--
--AND WE ARE HERE TO BEG YOUR AID IN A GRAVE MISSION. WE WOULD ASK YOU TO SLAY AN UNNATURAL CREATURE OF FIRE AND STENCH--ONE OF YOUR KIND--
IN SHORT, A DRAGON.
I KNOW WHY YOU ARE HERE. LET'S SEE THE ARTIFACTS.
A...CLAW?
A TOOTH! BY THE GODS! YOU WANT ME TO DO BATTLE WITH THAT?
WHO ELSE CAN WE TURN TO? WHO ELSE STANDS A CHANCE AGAINST SUCH EVIL?
I KNOW THERE IS SOMETHING CALLED EVIL. BUT I BELIEVE THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A CREATURE, LIKE A MAN, SIMPLY TO HAVE LIVED TOO LONG.
I MUST THINK.


LATER, IN A NEARBY FIELD...
THIS DRAGON IS THE LAST OF ITS KIND, LIKE ME. WHEN WE'RE GONE, HALF THE POWERS OF THE UNIVERSE VANISH WITH US.
DON'T KILL IT THEN.
I HAVE NO CHOICE. THERE IS NO ONE ELSE.
YES THERE IS! ME! I'LL GO!
NONSENSE.
I CAN DO IT. PLEASE. I CAN DO THE INCANTATIONS.
WATCH... I'LL BURN THAT BUSH--
ITERO. HERBUS MINMUS INCENDRE! SIC IMPERO EGO, GALEN BRADWARDYN...
COME ON, BUSH. BURN! BURN!
YOU WISH TO DO--
--THIS!
YOU HAVE MUCH YET TO LEARN... MUCH.
PA-WOOF!
EARLY THE FOLLOWING MORNING...
NO POINT IN DELAYING. I'M OFF ON MY JOURNEY.
I'LL FLATTEN THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN. WHAT SAY YOU, GALEN?
YOU HAVE FORSEEN YOUR OWN DEATH. YOU TOLD ME SO. I BEG YOU... SEND ME.
LOOK... MOUNTED STRANGERS ARRIVE!



GOOD MORROW TO ALL. I AM TYRIAN OF URLAND.
WORD HAS COME TO ME THAT MY YOUNG FRIEND VALERIAN HAS ENLISTED THE AID OF A SORCEROR TO SOLVE OUR DRAGON PROBLEM.
WHAT DO YOU WANT, TYRIAN?
MERELY ASSURANCE THAT WE HAVE THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE JOB. A TEST.
OUTRAGEOUS! DO YOU KNOW WHO THE MASTER IS?
PUT THIS AMULET IN THE CONJURING ROOM.
WE DON'T DO TESTS.
I'M SURE YOU DON'T...NOR ANY REAL MAGIC, EITHER.
YOU SHALL HAVE YOUR TEST!
GALEN...GO TO THE IRON BOX. FETCH ME THE DAGGER WITHIN!
HE CAN'T MEAN THIS ONE! THIS IS GENUINE...A MURDER WEAPON!
THROW US THE DAGGER, BOY!

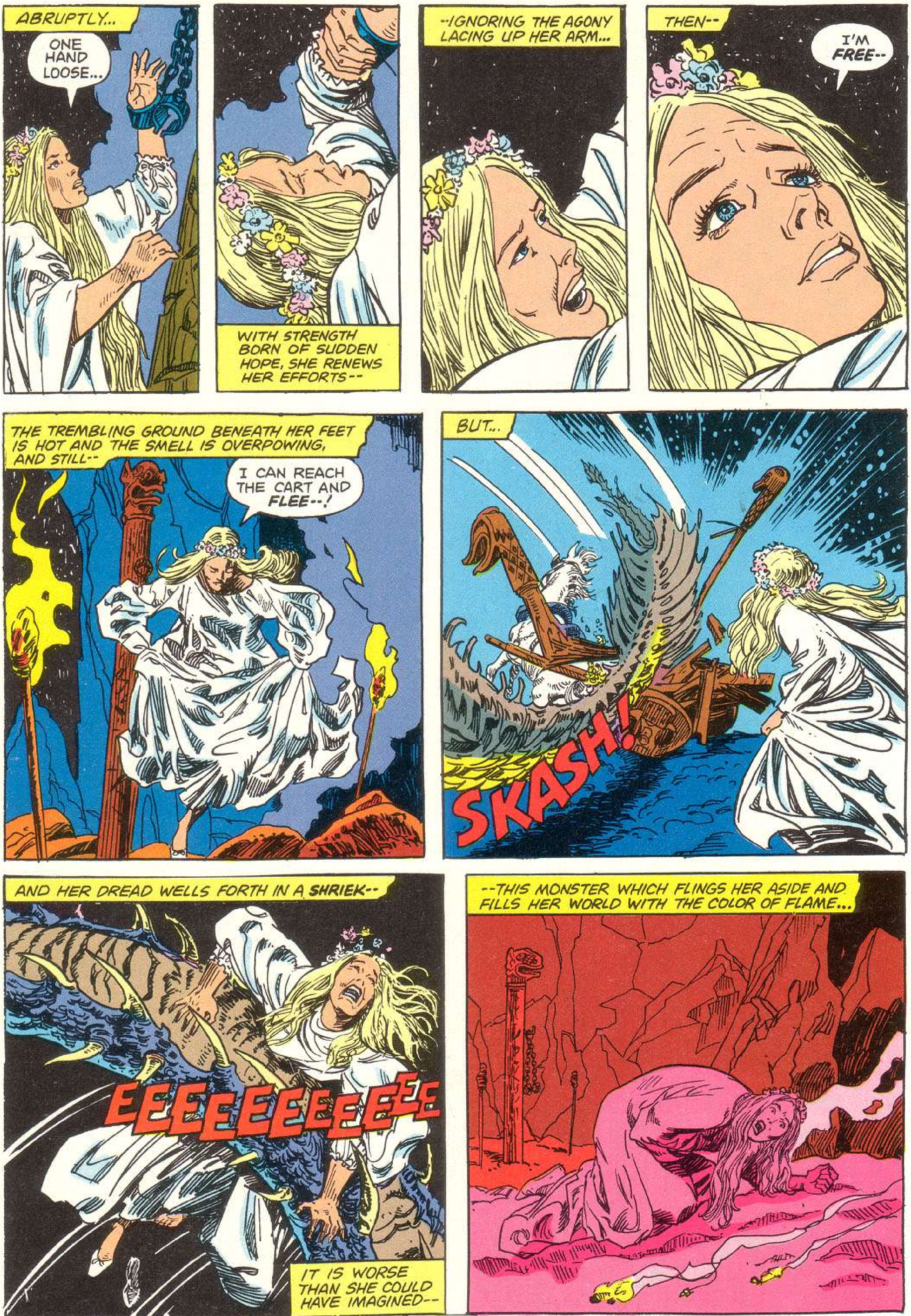

GRACEFULLY, THE GLEAMING BLADE SPINS DOWNWARD AND--
T-CHUCK
FOR YOUR USE, TYRIAN-- YOUR TEST.
GALEN REALIZES WHAT IS TO COME, SPINS--
NO, MASTER ULRICH.
--BUT THE DOOR SHUTS OF ITS OWN ACCORD...
...AND LOCKS--
LET ME OUT!
WOOD AND IRON DO NOT REPLY...
FEELING SQUEAMISH? DON'T WORRY, YOU CAN'T HURT ME.
SUDDENLY, TYRIAN LUNGES, BURIES THE BLADE IN ULRICH'S CHEST...
SMILING, THE SORCEROR STANDS UNBENT, SEEMINGLY UNHURT--
THEN, AFTER A LONG MOMENT, HE SLOWLY SAGS FORWARD OVER THE DAGGER AND THE HAND THAT HOLDS IT...
...AND LIES STILL--
BLIND WITH GRIEF, GALEN AT FIRST DOES NOT SEE THE DOOR UNLATCH AND SWING WIDE...
WHEN HE DOES, HE DOES NOT CARE--
SOON, TYRIAN AND HIS COMPANION ARE GALLOPING TOWARD URLAND...
SATISFIED?
SATISFIED ENOUGH.



JUST AT DAWN, GALEN AND HODGE STAND AT A FUNERAL PYRE AS FLAMES CLAIM THE REMAINS OF ULRICH...
...THE KINDEST LORD A MAN COULD ASK FOR...NOW HE'S GONE...
AND, IN THE CONJURING ROOM...
THE AMULET. I MAY AS WELL RETURN IT TO THE JEWEL CASKET. I HAVE NO FURTHER USE FOR IT--
--NOR HAS ANYONE!
HE CLOSES THE LID ON THE GLITTERING BAUBLE--
HOWEVER, A MOMENT LATER...
IT...IS NOT POSSIBLE--! THE AMULET, HERE...IN A FLASK WHOSE NECK IS TO NARROW TO PASS THROUGH...
AN OMEN...A SIGN I AM MEANT TO COMPLETE MASTER ULRICH'S WORK...
A JOYOUS OMEN!
HODGE... PREPARE FOR A JOURNEY!
SOON...
FEH! CHEAP TRICKS! YOU'VE A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE YOU'RE READY TO TAKE HIS PLACE.
I HAVE HAVE TAKEN IT!
AT DUSK, GALEN AND HODGE OVERTAKE THE PARTY FROM URLAND...
PEACE, MY FRIENDS.
MY LORD ULRICH IS NO LONGER. ALL THAT YOU ASKED OF HIM, YOU MAY NOW EXPECT OF ME. THE DANGERS HE FACED, I WILL NOW CONQUER. THE TASK HE WOULD UNDERTAKE I WILL NOW FULFILL.
YOUNG SNOT-NOSE, COME FOR SPORT AT OUR EXPENSE. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE ABOUT SORCERY..


ALL I'VE SEEN IS DEATH... DEATH IN MY FAMILY, DEATH ON THE ROAD AND TONIGHT THERE'S DEATH AT HOME--
I WILL SERVE MY OWN PORTION OF DEATH--
STOP! I'VE DONE YOU NO WRONG!
OWF! VALERIAN!
FOOL! LOOK AT THE MOON...IT'S THE EQUINOX! ON THIS NIGHT A YEAR AGO I LOST A DAUGHTER--
--AND NOW IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN! OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE LOTTERY?
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT ON THIS NIGHT A GIRL CHILD IS CHOSEN AS A SACRIFICE TO THE BEAST?
"MAY THE GODS HELP WHOEVER'S CHILD IT IS TONIGHT!"
CLOSE ENOUGH. BRING HER OUT.
BE IT KNOWN THAT THIS MAIDEN SHALL HEREBY GIVE UP HER LIFE FOR THE GREATER GOOD OF URLAND BY THIS ACT SHALL BE SATISFIED THE CREATURE THAT DWELLS UNDERGROUND--
--AND THE SPIRITS THAT ATTEND THERETO, SO THE REST OF US MAY BE SPARED.
I'M SORRY, GIRL!


ALL IS READY?
BRING HER HENCE!
EASY, GIRL...IN A FEW MINUTES IT WILL BE OVER.
ORDAINED THIS DAY BY THE REIGNING KING, CASIODORUS, IN HIS GLORY...
THE CHANCELLOR'S VOICE DIES AS A LOW RUMBLING COMES FROM BELOW...
...AND THE AIR GROWS THICK. A SULPHUROUS STENCH PERVADES THE NIGHT, MAKING EYES STING AND NOSTRILS QUIVER...
THE ANIMAL WHINNIES IN PANIC--
ALONE, NOW, THE GIRL WATCHES SMOKE RISE FROM THE CREVICE AND HER CRY IS FULL OF DETERMINATION--
NO!
I WON'T. LET IT HAPPEN TO ME--!
I WILL LIVE!
CHAINS TAUTEN AS SHE STRAINS...
...FEAR SEEMS TO BE A LIVING THING, BREATHING IN THE DARKNESS...
I WILL--
...LIVE.
I MUST...
BLOOD AND SWEAT MINGLE WARMLY ON HER FLESH...


ABRUPTLY...
ONE HAND LOOSE...
WITH STRENGTH BORN OF SUDDEN HOPE, SHE RENEWS HER EFFORTS--
--IGNORING THE AGONY LACING UP HER ARM...
THEN--
I'M FREE--
THE TREMBLING GROUND BENEATH HER FEET IS HOT AND THE SMELL IS OVERPOWING, AND STILL--
I CAN REACH THE CART AND FLEE--!
BUT...
SKASH!
AND HER DREAD WELLS FORTH IN A SHRIEK--
EEEEEEEEEEEE
IT IS WORSE THAN SHE COULD HAVE IMAGINED--
--THIS MONSTER WHICH FLINGS HER ASIDE AND FILLS HER WORLD WITH THE COLOR OF FLAME...


DESPERATELY, SHE SCRAMBLES--
--ONLY TO BE BLOCKED...
WITH A FINAL, RESIGNED WHIMPER, SHE TURNS AND GAZES UPWARD, LIKE A BRIDE GAZING UPON THE ONE SHE LOVES...
...TO BE, AT LAST CONSUMED...
AT DAWN THE FOLLOWING MORNING, VALERIAN HAPPENS ON A COOL, CRYSTALLINE POOL IN A SECLUDED FOREST GLADE...
...GLANCES AROUND FURTIVELY AND SEES NO HUMAN CREATURE, NOR HEARS ANYTHING EXCEPT THE SOFT MURMURS OF THE WOODLAND...
A MOMENT LATER, SIGHS IN CONTENTMENT...
MEANWHILE...
FETCH VALERIAN. WE'RE READY TO BREAK CAMP.
I SAW HIM HEADING INTO THE WOODS.
YOU BETTER COME ALONG. WE'RE LEAVING.
YOU GO AHEAD. I'LL CATCH UP.


NOT A GOOD IDEA TO GET SEPARATED. I'LL JOIN YOU.
NO!
YOU BETTER GET BACK TO THE GROUP. THEY'RE PROBABLY WORRIED.
I PREFER TO SWIM ALONE, IF YOU DON'T MIND.
YOU... YOU'RE NOT--
...A BOY!
AT THAT MOMENT, NEAR THE CAMP...
LOOK... THE OLD RETAINER FROM CRAGGANMORE.
"I WONDER WHAT HE IS DOING HERE?"
FILLING IN FOR HIS CHIEF.
BRING ME MY BOW. ANOTHER SORCEROR IS GOING TO FAIL HIS TEST.
AND...
I SUPPOSE YOU'LL TELL EVERYONE THAT I'M A FEMALE. GO AHEAD. IT'LL MAKE A GREAT STORY.
DON'T WORRY. NO ONE'S GOING TO FIND OUT. JUST TELL ME... WHY?
IT'S THE LOTTERY, ISN'T IT?
DAUGHTERS ARE CHOSEN, BUT SONS ARE NOT.
THAT'S RIGHT. UNLESS YOU HAPPEN TO BE THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING. OR IF YOU'VE GOT GOLD. OR PROPERTY.


IF YOU'RE RICH ENOUGH, YOUR NAME NEVER GOES IN--
LOOK ...IN THE POOL--
--IN THE WATER, GALEN SEES THE IMAGE OF TYRIAN IN THE ACT OF COMMITTING MURDER...A MAGIC IMAGE--
--A TERRIFYING IMAGE...
NO!
HE IS TOO LATE...
HODGE...CAN YOU HEAR ME?
THERE'S SOMETHING THAT HAS TO BE DONE... NOT THE DRAGON... ULRICH'S ASHES...IN THIS POUCH... TAKE IT--
WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THIS?
...BURNING WATER...
HODGE! DON'T DIE!
EXCEDE, MORTEM REVOCA, VITAM!
DON'T DIE!
BUT NEITHER THE AMULET NOR THE WORDS OF ENCHANTMENT ARE OF ANY USE...
HODGE IS DEAD, AND SORROW CLOSES IN ON GALEN...
END OF PART ONE...


PART II
WIND WHIPS THE LEADEN WAVE-TOPS ON THIS VAST, RAINY LAKE. THE TRAVELERS HAVE BEEN ROWING FOR MOST OF A DAY NOW...
GALEN BROODS IN THE BOW, AWARE OF THE OTHERS' EYES UPON HIM, FEELING LIKE AN IMPOSTOR. THE GREIL CRIES--
URLAND AHEAD!
SOON...
COME ON. DON'T DAWDLE.
THE WHOLE KINGDOM IS LIKE THIS?
NO.
KEEP MOVING. WE'RE NEAR THE DRAGON'S LAIR. .
WE'RE IN NO DANGER IF WE KEEP MOVING.


I SEE IT. LET'S HAVE A CLOSER LOOK.
NO!
THIS IS WHERE THE VICTIMS ARE CHAINED?
DRIED BLOOD ON THE MANACLES... FAIRLY FRESH, TOO.
AND THERE'S THE ENTRANCE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS. WE KNOW YOU'RE A FINE YOUNG MAGICIAN. THERE'S NO NEED TO PROVE IT.
DON'T BE A FOOL. COME AWAY NOW AND LIVE TO TELL ABOUT IT.
THE ROCKS ARE HOT... AND THAT SMOKE-- UNLIKE I'VE EVER SMELLED.
OH, THERE'S MONSTER NEAR, FOR SURE.
KOFF
KOFF
GASPING, HE STUMBLES OUTSIDE, AND...
I CAN DESTROY IT. HERE. NOW. SEE THOSE BIG BOULDERS?
TU SAZEM SAXI, IN ADVERSUM MONTEM-- OPERAM DA!
IT'S WORKING! TAKE COVER! I'VE CAUSED A--
LANDSLIDE!
MINUTES PASS BEFORE THE DUST CLOUD LIFTS TO REVEAL...
THE LAIR... UNDER TONS OF ROCK.
THE DRAGON IS BURIED... FOREVER!

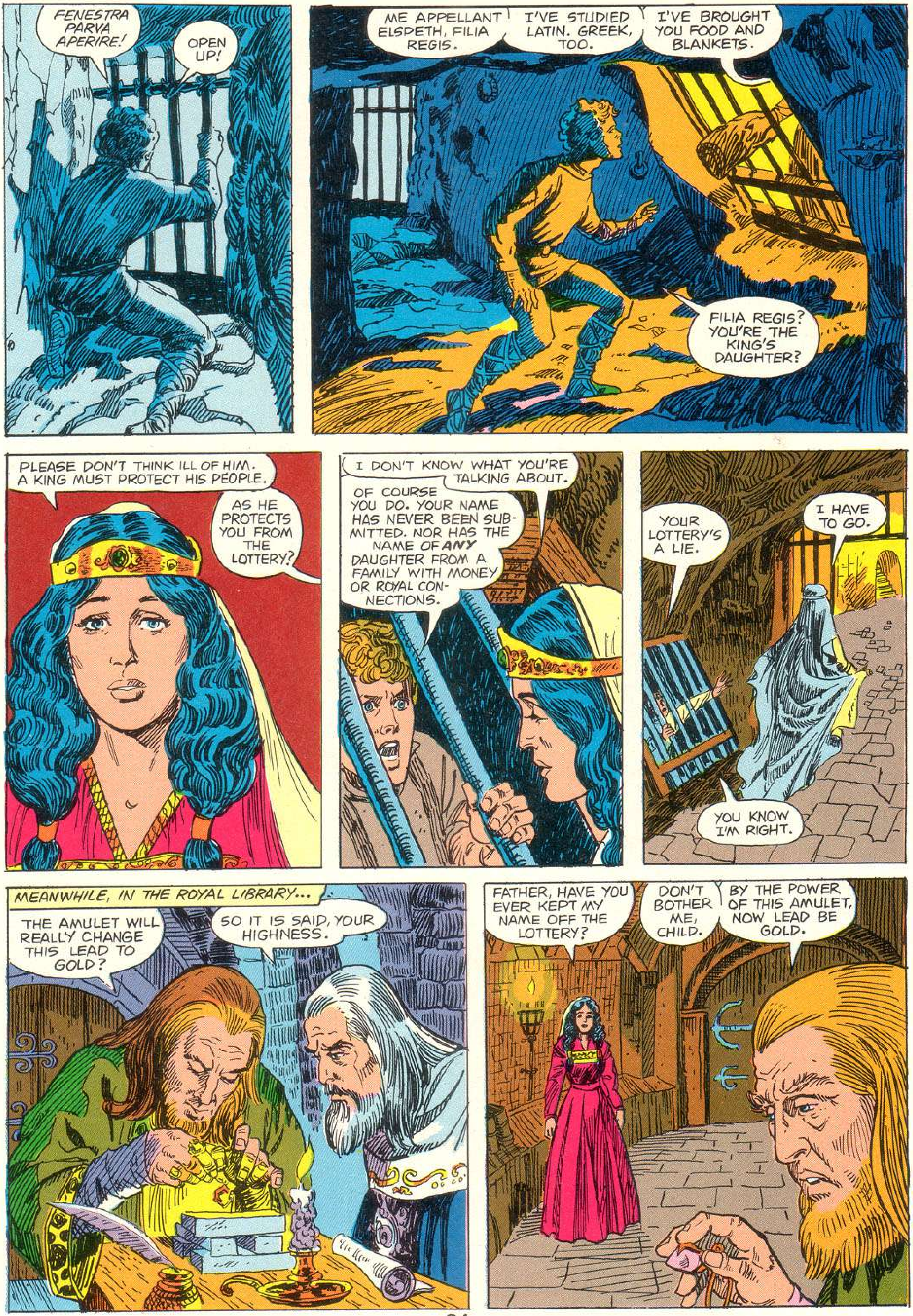

A BRIEF JOURNEY BRINGS THEM TO THE VILLAGE OF SWANSCOMBE...
DESERTED! WHERE IS EVERYONE?
THERE'S NOISE COMING FROM THE GRANGE HALL.
A HALL THAT HAS BECOME A CHURCH...
...PURIFIED IN SPIRIT AND SO PROTECTED AGAINST ALL EVIL!
IT'S THIS MONK. THIS CHRISTIAN. HE CAN READ AND WRITE--AND TALK.
NOW YOU ARE CLEANSED OF YOUR SINS. NOW YOU ARE BORN AGAIN.
SUPERSTITION, FRIEND. NOTHING TO WHAT I HAVE ALREADY ACHIEVED--
--FOR I HAVE RID YOU OF THE DRAGON AS EASILY AS I CONJURE UP THIS FIREBALL.
IT'S TRUE.
THEN LET US LOOK...
AT THE SITE OF THE LAIR...
THE LORD BE PRAISED.
YOUR GOD HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.
IF THAT BE SO...THIS IS AN UNHOLY PLACE. CURSED BY DEMONS AND PAGAN RITUAL.
LATER, AT THE HOUSE OF SIMON THE BLACKSMITH...
PUT THAT DRESS AWAY, VALERIAN. WHAT IF YOU WERE SEEN?
FATHER, THE DANGER IS OVER. I WANT TO BE SEEN. TONIGHT THE WORLD FINDS OUT YOU NEVER HAD A SON.


AND THE WORLD DOES, AT THE CELEBRATION.
LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE BEEN UP TO A LITTLE SORCERY YOURSELF. OR IS IT WITCHCRAFT?
DANCE?
I THINK IT WAS MUCH EASIER BEING A BOY.
THE DAMNEDEST THING IS, SHE WAS TWICE THE MAN OF ANYONE ELSE IN THE VILLAGE. NOW SHE'S TWICE THE WOMAN.
WOULD THAT I HAD BEEN AS CLEVER AS HER FATHER.
OUTSIDE...
A CELEBRATION, LORD TYRIAN.
YOUNG GALEN, THE KING WOULD MEET WITH YOU AND OFFER HIS GRATITUDE TO THE MAN WHO HAS SUCCEEDED WHERE SO MANY HAVE FAILED.
WHAT SORT OF GRATITUDE? A KNIFE IN THE BELLY?
I'D AS SOON DISPATCH YOU AS I DID THE OTHERS, AND FOR THE SAME REASON. BUT HIS MAJESTY WOULD LIKE A COZY CHAT AND COMMANDS OTHERWISE.
WITHIN THE CASTLE...
IF I WERE THE KING OF URLAND, WHERE WOULD I GO TO GET A REALLY FRESH EGG?
WATCH CLOSELY, YOUR MAJESTY. NOTICE THERE'S NOTHING IN THE SCARF--

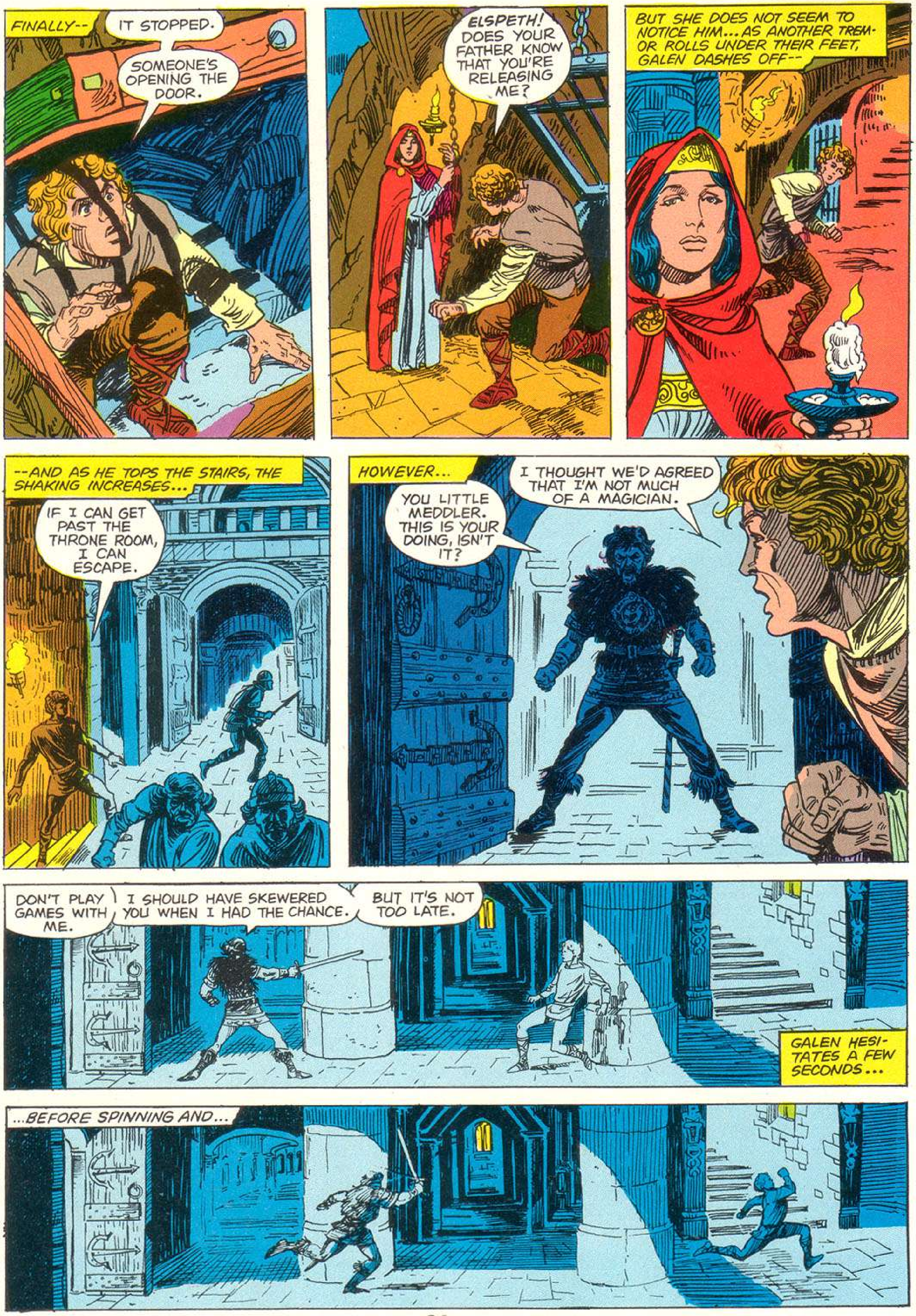


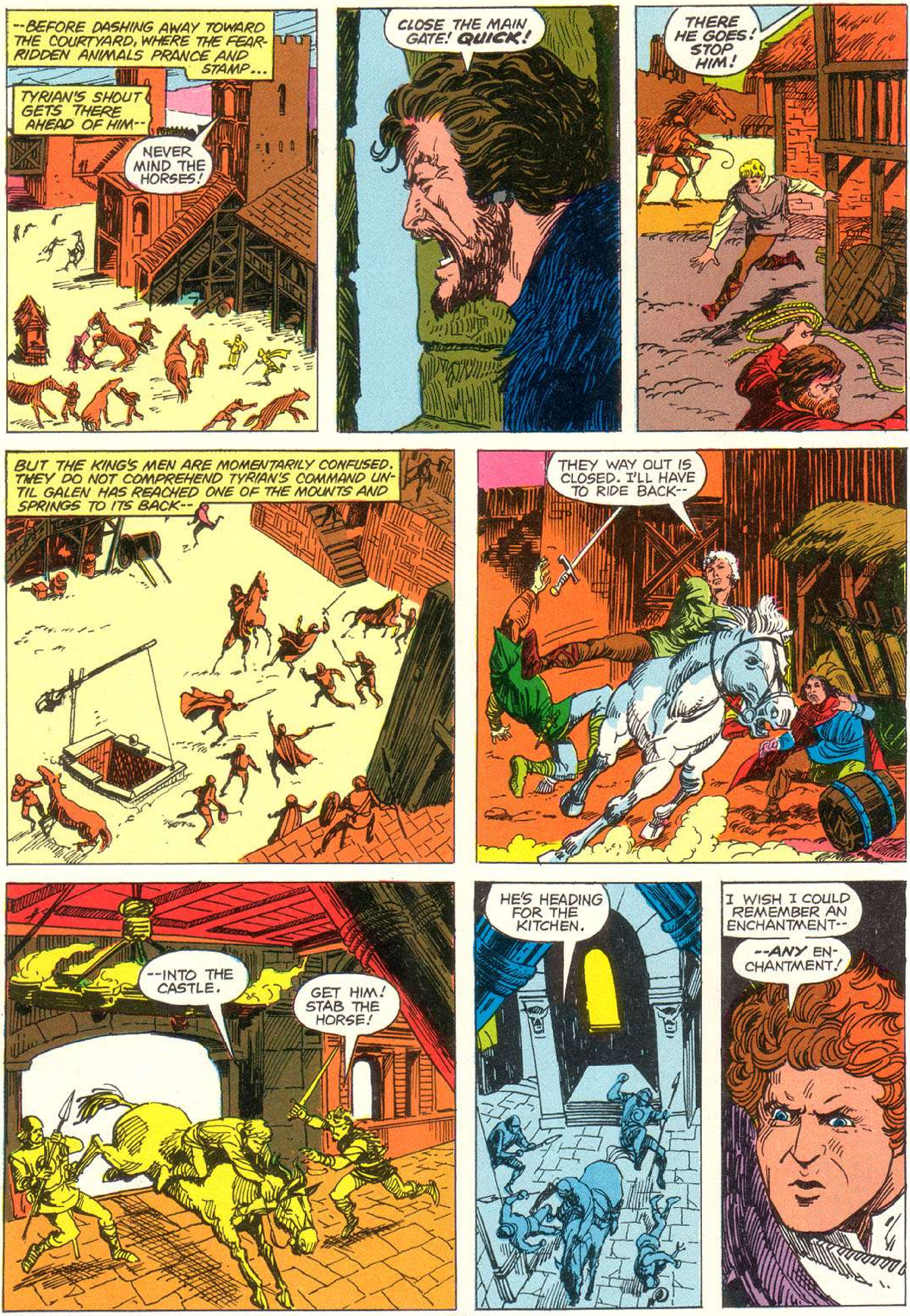
I WAVE THE SCARF AND-- BEHOLD! WHY, THAT'S WHERE WE GO TO GET A REALLY FRESH EGG.
VERY NICE.
ADMITTEDLY, THAT WAS A MINOR BIT OF WIZARDRY. THE NEXT ONE, NOW... HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE SEEN A TABLE FLY?
HEUS MENSA SURGE.
ENOUGH. THAT'S FINE.
TELL ME, THE LANDSLIDE... IT WAS ACCOMPLISHED THIS SAME WAY?
YES.
AND HAVING RENDERED SUCH A UNIQUE SERVICE, WHAT WOULD YOU CLAIM AS A REWARD? A POT OF GOLD? THE HAND OF THE PRINCESS?
PLEASE... NO PAYMENT. I SEEK ONLY SOME YET GREATER CHALLENGE.
HOW DID YOU ARROGATE TO YOURSELF THE ROLE OF SAVIOR?
I WAS INVITED.
NOT BY ME.
I THINK YOU ARE NOTHING BUT A BOY, AN ACOLYTE AT BEST. IF YOU DO ENGAGE IN NECROMANCY, IT IS SURELY NOT BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU ARE. BUT BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU HAVE.
THIS AMULET!


I'LL HAVE IT!
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? YOU WANT THE DRAGON BACK?
I CREATED THE LOTTERY. ME! AND FROM THE MOMENT IT BEGAN, THE DRAGON WAS TAME. THE KINGDOM PROSPERED.
YOU CAN'T BARGAIN WITH DRAGONS --NOR CAN YOU STEAL WHAT IS MINE!
WE SHALL SEE.
TAKE HIM AWAY.
AND...
NOTHING TO WORRY WORRY ABOUT. A SORCEROR OF YOUR CALIBER DESERVES ONLY THE FINEST ACCOMODATION.
I'M NOT GOING IN THERE!
NO?
SWAT
A WONDERFUL WIZARD I AM. I'VE TRADED THE AMULET FOR A CELL AND A BLOODY MOUTH.
UNKNOWN TO GALEN, HIS PAIN AND HUMILIATION HAVE HAD A WITNESS...
OUTSIDE, DARK CLOUDS SLIDE ACROSS A PALE SUN AND SOON FAT DROPLETS OF RAIN ARE SPLATTERING THE ROCKS ABOVE THE DRAGON'S LAIR. WITH EACH SPLASH, THERE IS A SIZZLE AND A PUFF OF STEAM...


FENESTRA PARVA APERIRE!
OPEN UP!
ME APPELLANT ELSPETH, FILIA REGIS.
I'VE STUDIED LATIN. GREEK, TOO.
I'VE BROUGHT YOU FOOD AND BLANKETS.
FILIA REGIS? YOU'RE THE KING'S DAUGHTER?
PLEASE DON'T THINK ILL OF HIM. A KING MUST PROTECT HIS PEOPLE.
AS HE PROTECTS YOU FROM THE LOTTERY?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
OF COURSE YOU DO. YOUR NAME HAS NEVER BEEN SUBMITTED. NOR HAS THE NAME OF ANY DAUGHTER FROM A FAMILY WITH MONEY OR ROYAL CONNECTIONS.
YOUR LOTTERY'S A LIE.
I HAVE TO GO.
YOU KNOW I'M RIGHT.
MEANWHILE, IN THE ROYAL LIBRARY...
THE AMULET WILL REALLY CHANGE THIS LEAD TO GOLD?
SO IT IS SAID, YOUR HIGHNESS.
FATHER, HAVE YOU EVER KEPT MY NAME OFF THE LOTTERY?
DON'T BOTHER ME, CHILD.
BY THE POWER OF THIS AMULET, NOW LEAD BE GOLD.


I'M BURNED! WHAT DEVILISH THING IS THIS?
PERHAPS WE'D BEST NOT FOOL WITH MAGIC, YOUR HIGHNESS.
ANSWER ME.
AM I NOT EXPOSED TO THE SAME RISK AS EVERY OTHER MAN'S DAUGHTER?
THERE'S BEEN A LOOSE TONGUE SOMEWHERE, SIRE.
THEN IT'S TRUE!
ELSPETH... YOUR FATHER LOVES YOU VERY MUCH.
YOU'VE BEEN LYING TO ME...AND TO EVERY-ONE!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?
AS IF IN ANSWER, A TREMOR PASSES THROUGH THE ROOM--
THE SAME TREMOR SHAKES GALEN'S CELL, BOUNCING HIM LIKE A TOY.
FOR A MOMENT, IT STOPS--
--TO RESUME A MOMENT LATER WITH THE FULL VIOLENCE OF AN EARTH-QUAKE.
IN THE VILLAGE--
--AND IN THE DRAGON COUNTRY. ABOVE THE MONSTER'S LAIR, BOULDERS GRIND AND SHIFT... AND BREAK LOOSE--


FINALLY--
IT STOPPED.
SOMEONE'S OPENING THE DOOR.
ELSPETH! DOES YOUR FATHER KNOW THAT YOU'RE RELEASING ME?
BUT SHE DOES NOT SEEM TO NOTICE HIM... AS ANOTHER TREMOR ROLLS UNDER THEIR FEET, GALEN DASHES OFF--
--AND AS HE TOPS THE STAIRS, THE SHAKING INCREASES...
IF I CAN GET PAST THE THRONE ROOM, I CAN ESCAPE.
HOWEVER...
YOU LITTLE MEDDLER. THIS IS YOUR DOING, ISN'T IT?
I THOUGHT WE'D AGREED THAT I'M NOT MUCH OF A MAGICIAN.
DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME.
I SHOULD HAVE SKEWERED YOU WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE.
BUT IT'S NOT TOO LATE.
GALEN HESITATES A FEW SECONDS...
...BEFORE SPINNING AND...


--BEFORE DASHING AWAY TOWARD THE COURTYARD, WHERE THE FEAR-RIDDEN ANIMALS PRANCE AND STAMP...
TYRIAN'S SHOUT GETS THERE AHEAD OF HIM--
NEVER MIND THE HORSES!
CLOSE THE MAIN GATE! QUICK!
THERE HE GOES! STOP HIM!
BUT THE KING'S MEN ARE MOMENTARILY CONFUSED. THEY DO NOT COMPREHEND TYRIAN'S COMMAND UNTIL GALEN HAS REACHED ONE OF THE MOUNTS AND SPRINGS TO ITS BACK--
THEY WAY OUT IS CLOSED. I'LL HAVE TO RIDE BACK--
--INTO THE CASTLE.
GET HIM! STAB THE HORSE!
HE'S HEADING FOR THE KITCHEN.
I WISH I COULD REMEMBER AN ENCHANTMENT--
--ANY ENCHANTMENT!


EXCUSE ME, LADY.
I HOPE I'M NOT DISTURBING YOU.
YOU'VE OUTSMARTED YOURSELF.
THERE'S NO EXIT FROM HERE.
SO MUCH FOR YOUR MAGIC! SO MUCH FOR YOUR SORCERY!
AT THAT MOMENT, THE FLOOR HEAVES AND CRACKS IN A NEW SERIES OF SHOCKS. TYRIAN REELS BACK, UNBALANCED--
--AND A WEAKENED SECTION OF THE ARCHED WINDOW CRUMBLES. WITHOUT WAITING FOR THE QUAKE TO CEASE--
--GALEN PRODS THE HORSE OVER THE LOW SILL TO FREEDOM!
AT TWILIGHT, THE EARTH IS STILL OCCASIONALLY TREMBLING AS THE VILLAGERS GATHER AT THE BASE OF THE LANDSLIDE AND BROTHER JACOBUS INTONES...
PRAY WITH ME, BRETHEREN, AND OUR FAITH WILL SEND THIS CREATURE STRAIGHT TO HELL.


THE MOMENT OF OUR FEAR IS THE HOUR OF OUR TRIUMPH.
THAT RUMBLING...
THE GROUND IS SPLITTING UNDER OUR FEET--
RUN! RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!
YOU CALL YOURSELVES CHRISTIANS? WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?
THE TREE, BROTHER...
I AM NOT AFRAID.
"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD...
UNNGH
"I SHALL NOT WANT... THOU MAKEST ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES...
"THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME..."
UNCLEAN BEAST! GET THEE DOWN!
MMMPF
HEAR ME? RETURN TO THY RANK DWELLING PLACE--



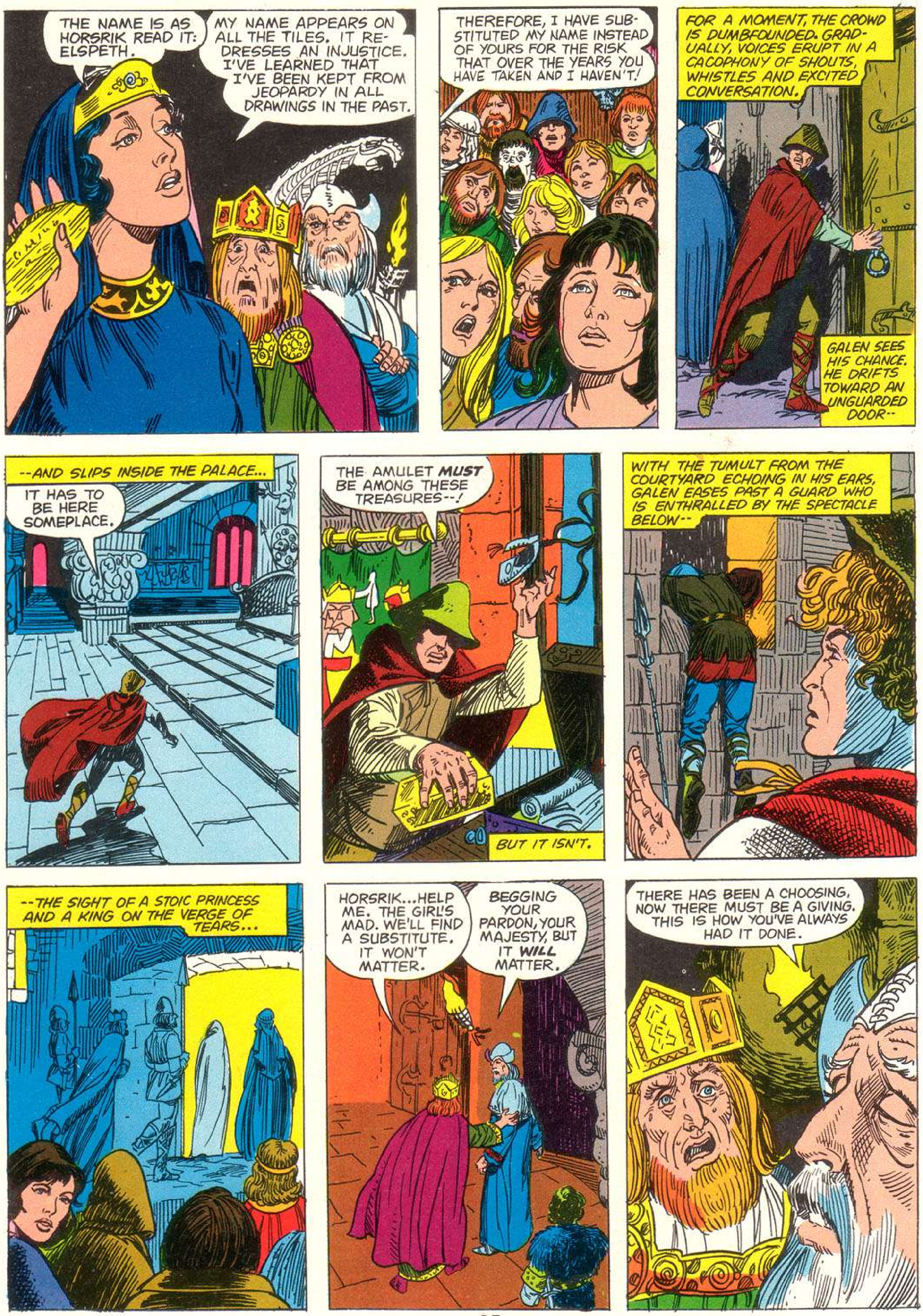
--DO NOT BEFOUL THE EARTH WITH THY...
...THY PRESENCE--
UNCLEAN BEAST, GET THEE DOWN. BE THOU CONSUMED BY THE FIRES--
AAAAGHHH!
IN THE HILLS ABOVE SWANSCOMBE...
FIELDS AND TREES... **BURNING**. AND THE VILLAGE, TOO.
WHAT IS THAT IN THE SKY?
IT GROWS RAPIDLY INTO A HUGE, HORRID SHAPE--
WITH A THUNDEROUS RUSH OF AIR THAT ALMOST BLOWS GALEN FROM THE SADDLE, THE DRAGON HURTLES BY...


DOWN HE GALLOPS, PAST SCREAMING VILLAGERS...
GET AWAY. WE'VE HAD ENOUGH HELP FROM YOU.
GET HIM!
IT'S ME, VALERIAN. ARE YOU HURT?
LISTEN, MAKE IT RAIN--PUT THE FIRES OUT. THEN GET THE ANIMALS BACK. THERE'S PEOPLE HURT--STOP THEIR PAIN. AND WE'LL NEED--
I CAN'T. WHATEVER POWER I MIGHT HAVE HAD, IT'S GONE. SORRY.
YOU'RE... SORRY! THE DAMN THING IS LOOSE, WE'RE ALL ON FIRE AND YOU'RE SORRY!
I DON'T WANT YOU IN THIS HOUSE! GET OUT!
DREAMS OF GLORY CRUSHED, GALEN NODS.
WELL...I GUESS YOU DIDN'T MEAN THE HARM YOU CAUSED. YOU DIDN'T DELIBERATELY FREE THE DRAGON!
YOU CAN STAY... QUIETLY!
AND, THE FOLLOWING DAY, AT VALERIAN'S FATHER'S SHOP--
WE'RE SEARCHING FOR THE MAGICIAN.
SEARCH AWAY. HE'S NOT HERE.
IT MAY INTEREST YOU TO KNOW THAT THE KING HAS CALLED FOR A NEW LOTTERY.
I'VE NEVER TAKEN PART IN YOUR LOTTERY.
I WANT TO. I WANT TO BE IN IT.


FINDING NO TRACE OF GALEN, TYRIAN AND HIS HENCHMEN LEAVE. AND...
YOU CAN COME OUT. IT'S SAFE NOW.
THANK YOU.
SIMON, ANSWER ME A QUESTION--
--HAVE YOU EVER FORGED A BLADE?
LET'S TAKE A WALK IN THE WOODS.
SOON...
HERE IT IS--THE BEST I EVER MADE.
GIRL-CHILD, WHEN YOU WERE BORN, I KNEW I HAD TO DO SOMETHING--SOMETHING TO SAVE YOU.
SO I SET ABOUT FASHIONING A WEAPON--AN EXTRAORDINARY WEAPON. "SECARIUS DRACONUM" --DRAGONSLAYER. I HAD THE THE SKILL TO MAKE IT...
...BUT NOT THE NERVE TO USE IT.
IT DOESN'T MATTER. WHAT YOU WANT TO KILL ISN'T FLESH AND BLOOD.
OH, IT'LL BLEED, ALL RIGHT.
I'LL STILL NEED THE AMULET.
NIGHT, AT THE CASTLE... THE VILLAGERS GATHER, NERVOUS AND EXCITED, THEIR MURMURS EDGED WITH HYSTERIA, AS THOUGH THEY WERE SPECTATORS AT A POTENTIALLY LETHAL SPORT--
--THEIR EYES FIXED ON A BARREL WHICH, THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD, CONTAINS THE NAMES OF EVERY MAIDEN IN THE AREA...


THEN, THE CROWD GROWS QUIET AS THE KING AND HIS DAUGHTER APPEAR...
YOU SEEM STRANGELY SILENT, ELSPETH.
DO I, FATHER?
AMONG THE ONLOOKERS, VALERIAN AND GALEN, IN DISGUISE...
LOOK AT HER. THE PRINCESS.
WE'VE MET.
PEOPLE OF URLAND! WHEREAS THE PEACE OF THE KINGDOM HAS BEEN DISRUPTED BY THE MISCHIEF OF AN INTERLOPER; AND WHEREAS THIS INTERLOPER BEING FLED; AND HOW, THEREFORE, HIS MAJESTY THE KING HEREBY PROCLAIMS THE SUM OF THIRTY DUCATS TO BE PAID TO ANYONE PRODUCING THE MISCREANT GALEN BRADWARDYN, FRAUD ENCHANTER...
THE LOTTERY! THE LOTTERY!
PUT AN END TO THE SUSPENSE!


BARE THE ARM! BARE THE ARM!
DRAW THE NAME! DRAW THE NAME!
NOW, MY COUNTRYMEN, HEAR ME! BEHOLD, FOR I AM CHOSEN. I SHALL DIE THAT MANY MAY LIVE. I SHALL GO TO MY GRAVE FOR THE LOVE OF OUR KING AND HIS WISE POLICY. AND MY NAME IS...
...THE NAME-- OH, NO...
WELL, HORSRIK?
--PRINCESS ELSPETH!
I ACCEPT THE HONOR.
THAT'S NOT THE NAME. IT'S BEEN MISREAD. I'LL DRAW ANOTHER.
THERE'S NO MISTAKE. THE NAME'S BEEN CHOSEN--LET IT STAND.
AT LAST WE SEE JUSTICE DONE.
SILENCE! WE WILL HAVE A NEW CHOOSING.
THE NEW NAME IS... IS...
I'LL READ IT.


THE NAME IS AS HORSRIK READ IT: ELSPETH.
MY NAME APPEARS ON ALL THE TILES. IT REDRESSES AN INJUSTICE. I'VE LEARNED THAT I'VE BEEN KEPT FROM JEOPARDY IN ALL DRAWINGS IN THE PAST.
THEREFORE, I HAVE SUBSTITUTED MY NAME INSTEAD OF YOURS FOR THE RISK THAT OVER THE YEARS YOU HAVE TAKEN AND I HAVEN'T!
FOR A MOMENT, THE CROWD IS DUMBFOUNDED. GRADUALLY, VOICES ERUPT IN A CACOPHONY OF SHOUTS, WHISTLES AND EXCITED CONVERSATION.
GALEN SEES HIS CHANCE. HE DRIFTS TOWARD AN UNGUARDED DOOR--
--AND SLIPS INSIDE THE PALACE...
IT HAS TO BE HERE SOMEPLACE.
THE AMULET MUST BE AMONG THESE TREASURES--!
BUT IT ISN'T.
WITH THE TUMULT FROM THE COURTYARD ECHOING IN HIS EARS, GALEN EASES PAST A GUARD WHO IS ENTHRALLED BY THE SPECTACLE BELOW--
--THE SIGHT OF A STOIC PRINCESS AND A KING ON THE VERGE OF TEARS...
HORSRIK...HELP ME. THE GIRL'S MAD. WE'LL FIND A SUBSTITUTE. IT WON'T MATTER.
BEGGING YOUR PARDON, YOUR MAJESTY, BUT IT WILL MATTER.
THERE HAS BEEN A CHOOSING, NOW THERE MUST BE A GIVING. THIS IS HOW YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD IT DONE.


UPSTAIRS, GALEN CONTINUES TO SEARCH FEVERISHLY--
--WHILE THE KING AND HIS LIEUTENANT DRAW NEAR...
YOU, TYRIAN--SURELY YOU'LL DO SOMETHING. IF NOT FOR ME, OUT OF LOYALTY TO THE KINGDOM.
BUT THAT'S JUST IT, YOUR MAJESTY. MY FIRST DUTY IS LOYALTY TO THE KINGDOM!
TOO LATE, THE YOUNG SORCEROR REALIZES HE IS NOT ALONE...
I TRUST YOU DID NOT FIND WHAT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR.
IM UNARMED. IF YOU WANT A FIGHT AT LEAST GIVE ME A WEAPON.
I THINK NOT.
DON'T HARM HIM--
I HAVE YOUR AMULET. TAKE IT.
SAVE MY DAUGHTER...I BEG YOU.
WILL YOU USE THE POWER YOU HOLD FOR US--OR AGAINST US?
THAT QUESTION DOES NOT DESERVE AN ANSWER.
DAWN SEES THE VILLAGERS BEGINNING REPAIRS...AND GREIL IN THEIR MIDST...
HOLY OF HOLIES, HE DID NOT DIE IN VAIN.
I'M GREIL NO LONGER. CALL ME GREGORIUS, AFTER THE BISHOP OF ROME.
POOR DEVIL. HE'S GONE COMPLETELY MAD.
INSIDE SIMON'S SHOP--
GOOD AND HOT.
BUT IT'S NOT THE KIND OF FIRE WE NEED. THAT CAN ONLY COME FROM THE AMULET!


NUNC, PER POTESTATEM HERMETICUM--EX FLAMMIS, FERRUM SA GRINARIUM!
AS GALEN SPEAKS THE ENCHANTMENT, THE LANCE GLOWS WITH UN-EARTHLY LIGHT--
SILENT AND FORGOTTEN, VALERIAN SEES GALEN'S RESOLVE AND, WATCHING SADLY FOR SEVERAL MINUTES, MOVES OUT THE DOOR...
ONCE OUTSIDE, HER STEP QUICKENS AND WITHIN THE HOUR SHE IS SEARCHING THE GROUND NEAR THE DRAGON'S LAIR...
AH, HERE'S ONE--
A HISS FROM BETWEEN TWO ROCKS AND--
A BASILISK...A BABY DRAGON--HIDEOUS!
AND ANOTHER--!
A THIRD! HOW MANY OF THEM ARE HERE?
I HAVE A FEELING I SHOULDN'T WAIT AROUND TO COUNT THEM--


--ESPECIALLY SINCE I HAVE WHAT I CAME FOR.
QUELLING A FEELING OF UTTER REVULSION SHE FLEES--
--LEAVING BEHIND MONSTROSITIES THAT SEEM TO MOCK HER...
MEANWHILE...
YOU HAVE ALL I CAN GIVE YOU...GLOVES... PADDED JERKIN... SHIELD...
--AND A LANCE WITH AN EDGE LIKE NO OTHER ON EARTH.
TEST IT, LAD!
IT SEVERED THE SWORD... AND THE ANVIL BENEATH.
YOU'RE WELL-ARMED...AND AS READY AS YOU'LL EVER BE.
FARE THEE WELL.
AS THE SUN CLIMBS TO ITS ZENITH, GALEN IS HIKING THROUGH ROUGH COUNTRY, MUTTERING...
I WISH I COULD HAVE SAID GOOD-BYE TO VALERIAN...
EH--? SOMETHING CLATTERING DOWN THE SLOPE...
A SHIELD...FASHIONED FROM DRAGON SCALES!
I MADE IT.
MIGHT KEEP THE FIRE OFF YOU. MIGHT NOT. YOU KNOW, YOU'RE AN IDIOT. YOU'RE GOING TO DIE TONIGHT. THIS IS THE LAST TIME I'LL EVER SPEAK TO YOU.


YOU'RE IN LOVE, AREN'T YOU?
YES.
I UNDERSTAND. SHE'S VERY BEAUTIFUL, VERY BRAVE--
--YOUR PRINCESS ELSPETH. BUT I DON'T CARE.
LISTEN TO ME...YOU'RE GOING TO BE DEAD, THE DRAGON WILL BE WORSE THAN EVER, THERE WILL BE MORE LOTTERIES--
HUSH. I AM IN LOVE, BUT NOT WITH THE PRINCESS.
AND THEY EMBRACE AS THE WIND BLOWS DARK, SHAPELESS CLOUDS TOWARD THE HORIZON...
BY NIGHTFALL, THAT WIND HAS BECOME COLD. IT WAILS MOURNFULLY THROUGH THE ROCKS NEAR THE DRAGON'S LAIR AS WORKMEN MAKE GRIM PREPARATIONS...
NO WORD IS UTTERED--
--UNTIL THE LOVELY SACRIFICE IS BROUGHT FORTH TO RECEIVE HER MANACLES AND HER DESTINY...
THEN HORSRIK MUTTERS--
BE IT KNOWN THAT THE PRINCESS, HAVING BEEN CHOSEN BY A DEED OF FORTUNE--
EH--? THE SCROLL'S **BURNING**...BUT WHERE DOES THE FLAME **COME** FROM?
FROM **ME!**
BE GONE, THE LOT OF YOU.
I...I DECLARE THESE PROCEEDINGS DULY COMPLETE...


I KNEW I'D FIND YOU HERE.
THE KINGDOM, EVERY ONE OF US, NEED THIS SACRIFICE. IF YOU INTERFERE, YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL ME.
I'VE GOT PLENTY OF REASONS TO KILL YOU THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS SACRIFICE.
TYRIAN...GALEN-- BOTH OF YOU-- RUN! FLEE! IT'S COMING!
SHE'S RIGHT. THERE'S NO POINT IN YOUR FALLING PREY TO THE BEAST--
COULD IT BE THAT YOU FEAR ME MORE THAN THE DRAGON?
YOU TURN AWAY. IN COWARDICE?
NO.
--TO FREE ELSPETH.
SHINK
GET OUT OF HERE, ELSPETH--!
NO! YOU'RE GOING THE WRONG WAY... INTO THE LAIR!
SHE SHOWS EXACTLY WHERE SHE'S GOING, MY FRIEND.



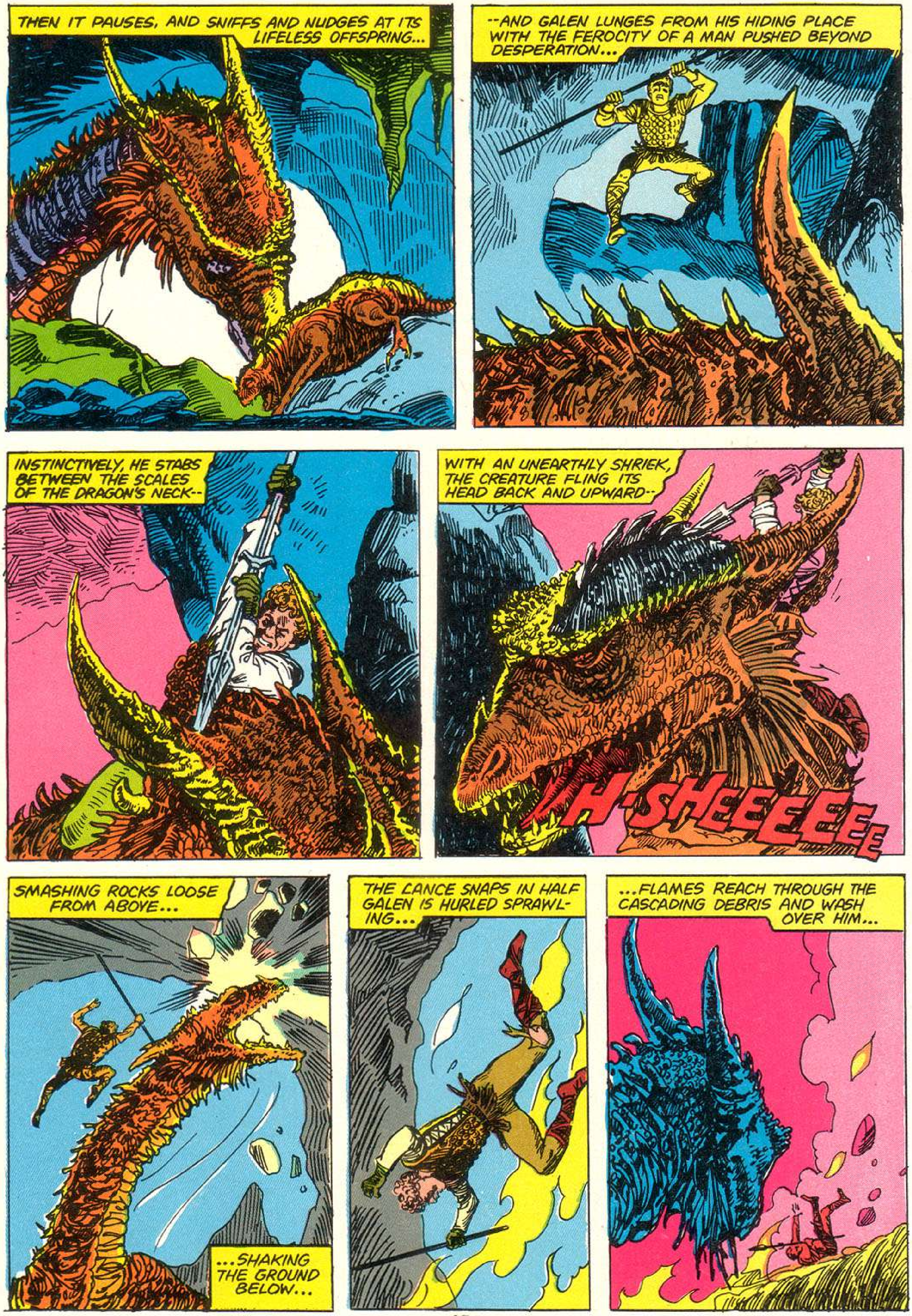
YOU'VE FAILED, AND I THANK THE GODS FOR IT. NOW PREPARE YOURSELF--
-- YOU'RE ABOUT TO DIE.
SHUNK
NOT I, TYRIAN--!
RUNNCH!
YOU FORCED ME.
I'M SORRY.
INTO THE EYE-STINGING MURK OF THE CAVE, HE PLUNGES, CALLING HOARSELY--
ELSPETH!
SOMETHING LYING ON THE GROUND...
ELSPETH'S SLIPPER--! SHE'S COME THIS DIRECTION...
WHAT'S THAT?
HE TURNS TOWARD A SCRATCHING SOUND AND GAGS--


ELSPETH!
OH NO...THOSE MONSTROSITIES ARE...ARE--
...FEEDING ON HER!
TWAK!
THE DRAGON YOUNG VALERIAN DESCRIBED...
...CAN ANYTHING BE MORE HIDEOUS? MORE REPULSIVE?
TWAK
GHAAH!
DIE, YOU FOULNESS...
...DIE--
DIE!
FARTHER AND FARTHER DOWN THE NARROW PASSAGE HE GOES...INTO HEAT THAT SEEMS TO ENCLOSE HIM LIKE A MONSTROUS FIST...SWEAT MATS HIS HAIR AND STINGS HIS EYES...UNTIL--
AN UNDERGROUND LAKE...A LAKE OF FIRE--!


IT'S HUGE...EXTENDS IN EVERY DIRECTION-- COULD IT LIE UNDER ALL THE EARTH'S SURFACE?
THE ONLY PATH IS ACROSS THESE STONES--
EH--? A RUMBLING... ANOTHER EARTHQUAKE--?
NO, NOT ANOTHER EARTHQUAKE...
...RATHER, THE CAUSE OF THE PREVIOUS ONES...
GALEN'S HEART POUNDS AND HIS BREATH IS TRAPPED IN HIS THROAT...
...FOR A SHAPE RISES FROM THE BOTTOMLESS DEPTHS OF NIGHTMARE--
THIS IS VERMITHRAX!



ONLY THE SHIELD VALERIAN GAVE ME...FASHIONED FROM ITS SCALES...IS PREVENTING ME FROM BEING BURNED ALIVE.
ITS STOPPED...
...DRAWING ANOTHER BREATH...
...GETTING READY TO BATHE ME IN FLAME AGAIN.
COUGHING AND WEEPING, GALEN TRIPS OVER THE BODY OF A BABY DRAGON--
A FEW SECONDS LATER, VERMITHRAX SQUIRMS AND CLAWS ITS WAY INTO THE TUNNEL...


THEN IT PAUSES, AND SNIFFS AND NUDGES AT ITS LIFELESS OFFSPRING...
--AND GALEN LUNGES FROM HIS HIDING PLACE WITH THE FEROCITY OF A MAN PUSHED BEYOND DESPERATION...
INSTINCTIVELY, HE STABS BETWEEN THE SCALES OF THE DRAGON'S NECK--
WITH AN UNEARTHLY SHRIEK, THE CREATURE FLING ITS HEAD BACK AND UPWARD--
H-SHEEEEEEE
SMASHING ROCKS LOOSE FROM ABOVE...
...SHAKING THE GROUND BELOW...
THE LANCE SNAPS IN HALF GALEN IS HURLED SPRAWL-ING...
...FLAMES REACH THROUGH THE CASCADING DEBRIS AND WASH OVER HIM...


AT DAWN'S FIRST LIGHT, VALERIAN IS ALREADY SEARCHING, TRYING NOT TO FEEL HOPE...
SHE FINDS THE BROKEN LANCE AND HER PULSE QUICKENS--
THEN SHE SEES A STILL, FORLORN FORM AND SHE WHISPERS--
GALEN--
STILL ALIVE.
AT SIMON'S SHOP...
WE HAVE TO LEAVE URLAND.
YOU SAID YOU LOVE ME. IF THAT'S TRUE, IT'S THE ONLY GOOD WE'VE DONE.
LET'S NOT LOSE THAT, TOO.
YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK? MAGIC, MAGICIANS--IT'S ALL DYING OUT. BUT THAT MAKES ME HAPPY. IT MEANS THE DRAGON WILL BE DYING OUT, TOO.
THIS--THE CROSS--IS THE FUTURE.
IT'S TOO LATE FOR ME. I'M BOUND TO THIS PLACE, THE OLD WAYS. BUT YOU'RE YOUNG.
GO.
WE WILL.
WHAT'S THAT?
JUST A MEMENTO...OF MY LATE MASTER, ULRICH.
AT NOON, THEY STOP TO REST, AND...
I'M SUDDENLY COLD.
THE LIGHT IS DIMMING...AND THERE'S SOMETHING ODD IN THE AIR.


WHAT IS THAT... A BLACK DISC SLIDING ACROSS THE SUN--!
IT'S CALLED AN ECLIPSE.
LOOK AT HOW IT MAKES THE WATER GLINT! LIKE A LAKE--
--A LAKE OF FIRE...THE BURNING WATER OLD HODGE MENTIONED.
I'VE GOT TO GO BACK! I'VE GOT TO TALK WITH HIM.
GALEN... WAIT!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO THE LAKE OF FIRE...TO THE DRAGON'S LAIR.
UNNOTICED BY EITHER GALEN OR VALERIAN, A DARK AND GRACEFUL SHAPE SAILS THROUGH THE SKY...
YOU'RE NOT COMING WITH ME. NO, YOU'RE NOT-- THIS IS MY JOB. ABSOLUTELY NOT.
YOU CAN'T STOP ME. AFTER ALL, I'VE BEEN A MAN LONGER THAN YOU HAVE.
INSIDE...
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND.
HE COULDN'T WALK-- HE KNEW HE COULDN'T MAKE THE JOURNEY, SO HE MADE US MAKE THE JOURNEY FOR HIM.
I SEE NOW. I AM TO POUR HIS ASHES INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE--
EX FAVILLA, VITA NOVA!


GALEN, I HEAR SOMETHING... STRANGE.
ROCKS FALLING... BEING KNOCKED LOOSE! BY WHAT--?
SHE GAZES UPWARD AND WANTS TO SCREAM. BUT SHE CAN'T.
AT THAT MOMENT, IN THE GRANGE HALL...
BE CALM. HE WATCHETH OVER US. LET US PRAY FOR A SIGN, FOR MIRACLES ARE POSSIBLE...
MIRACLES...
WONDER OF WONDERS. HE'S BACK! I THANK THE POWERS THAT MADE ME!
ULRICH! MAGISTER! OVER HERE--
NOT SO LOUD. I'M NOT DEAF, YOU KNOW.
GOT TO SEE YOU.
YOU DIDN'T BRING ALONG ANYTHING TO EAT, BY ANY CHANCE.


TIME SEEMS TO HAVE STOPPED. OVERHEAD, THE MOON IS LOCKED IN FRONT OF THE SUN.
SUDDENLY, VALERIAN RECOVERS AND RUNS--
--NOT FAR ENOUGH...
I'M TRAPPED!
I WON'T CRY FOR HELP! I WON'T! I WON'T! ENDANGER GALEN BY BRINGING HIM. I WON'T...
HE IS ON HIS WAY NONETHELESS...
I THOUGHT I WAS A SORCEROR, BUT I'M NOT. YOU SAID TO BE STRONG, BUT I WASN'T.
BUT YOU WERE, MY BOY. AND YOU WILL BE STRONGER YET.
AY, YES. AT LAST I MEET MY COUNTERPART, THE DRAGON.
DRACO DRACONUM...
AS THOUGH INCENSED AT THE MAGICIAN'S GREETING, VERMITHRAX SOARS SKYWARD...
THIS IS VALERIAN--
I REMEMBER. THE GIRL WHO CAME TO US AS A BOY.
YOU WEAR THE CROSS? HMMM... FOR THE WORK AHEAD, YOU'LL NEED THE AMULET.
THERE IS SOMETHING YOU MUST DO. DESTROY THE AMULET--AND ME WITH IT.
WE'VE GOT TO FOLLOW HIM!


A BITTER WIND WHIPS THE CHURNING CLOUDS AND THUNDER BOOMS AND ECHOES AS ULRICH FLOATS HIGHER THAN THE HIGH-EST CRAG TO MINGLE HIS VOICE WITH THAT OF THE STORM--
NIMBE! TEMPESTAS! FULMEN!
A SUDDEN STILLNESS AND--
SO! WE KINDRED SPIRITS JOIN IN THE FINAL CONFLICT--!
THE CHRISTIANS SAY, "LOVE THY ENEMY!"
COULD I DO OTHERWISE?
AGGH!
MASTER!
DO AS HE SAID! SMASH THE AMULET! YOU CAN'T PREVENT HIS DYING--
--YOU CAN ONLY PREVENT HIS DEATH BEING IN VAIN!
THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN HIM AND THE AMULET--
YES, AND THE DRAGON, TOO. DE-STROY ONE AND ALL ARE DESTROYED--
--AND SO MUCH ELSE...A CREED, A FAITH, A REASON FOR BEING!


GALEN!
THUS DOES AN AGE END--
--AS A GLOWING OBJECT IS SHATTERED INTO BITS--
--AND, SIMULTANEOUSLY, ULRICH'S EARTHLY FORM EXPLODES AGAINST THE BELLY OF THE BEAST.
ULRICH IS GONE. VERMITHRAX REMAINS, BRIEFLY AS A REPTILIAN TORCH PLUNGING DOWNWARD--
--A FLUTTERING THING THAT SPASHES INTO A POND. STEAM ERUPTS WITH A SOUND LIKE A SIGH--
--AND RISES INTO THE RAYS OF A SUN FREED FROM DARKNESS SHINING NEW AND BRIGHT UPON A GREEN AND GLEAMING LAND...
I SUPPOSE IT WAS AN HONOR.
IT WAS A TASK, GALEN-- YOUR TASK. AND NOW IT'S DONE.
LATER...
WE THANK THEE, LORD, FOR THIS DEVINE DELIVERANCE. VERILY IS THY PRESENCE AMONG US, FULLY MANIFEST IN THIS, THY GREAT WORK.
ARISE, CHILDREN OF THE LORD, AND FORSAKE EVERMORE THE PAGAN MYSTERIES!


MAKE WAY FOR THE KING.
ALL HAIL CASIDORUS REX, DRAGON SLAYER.
YES, YES...I, AH, HEREBY SLAY THE BEAST.
I'D RATHER NOT WATCH THIS FOOLISHNESS.
I SUPPOSE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF FOOLISHNESS IS NECESSARY TO KINGS.
COME. WE HAVE A JOURNEY TO CONTINUE.
AND...
YOU MAY NOT BE A SORCEROR, GALEN, BUT I LOVE YOU ANYWAY. I DON'T REGRET ANYTHING THAT HAPPENED. I JUST WISH...WELL, I'M TIRING. I WISH WE HAD A HORSE.
LOOK...BY THE ROADSIDE.
DID YOU--?
NO. IT MUST HAVE BEEN WANDERING LOOSE. OR WILD.
IT'S EASIER TO BELIEVE THAT THAN TO BELIEVE IN MAGIC.
ISN'T IT?
THE END

The Making of DRAGONSLAYER™





ENTER: *THE DRAGON*

by Danny Fingeroth



From the depths of a primal nightmare it stalks. It's name is *Vermithrax Pejorative* (Latin for "The Worm of Thrace Which Makes Things Worse") and it is the last of the great dragons, a four-hundred year old androgyne, a fire-breathing monstrosity. To the people of ***Dragonslayer's*** mythical Urland, it is the be-all and end-all, the fact of life that determines everything they do. And, in another sense, it was the central focus of the lives of all those who participated in the making of ***Dragonslayer*** during the months the film was in production. A full twenty-five percent of ***Dragonslayer's*** 16 million dollar budget went into the special effects which bring the creature to life.

The beast you perceive on the screen — a forty foot dragon with a ninety foot wingspan — was spawned in the imaginations of ***Dragonslayer's*** producer, Hal Barwood, and its director, Matthew Robbins, who were also the film's co-writers. Their inspiration began to take more concrete visual form through the efforts of graphic artist David Bunnett. The writing team would feed Bunnett their ideas and he would render them on paper. Together they plotted out the mechanics of how the dragon would look, walk, and fly.

"The most important and powerful actions for the dragon," says Bunnett, "were in the final battle's flying sequence. So very early along, we decided it was necessary to design a dragon that looked best when flying. The emphasis on flight dictated that the dragon look light enough to fly and have enormous wings."

The dragon's personality wasn't overlooked in those early planning stages, either. Says Bunnett: "It has a frown and a slightly human, intelligent look. It is not a creature simply programmed to eat, but a creature with a mind. You won't feel sympathy for the dragon, but it will have a kind of majesty. We didn't want to end up with the creature from ***Alien***, which was too hideous to look at."

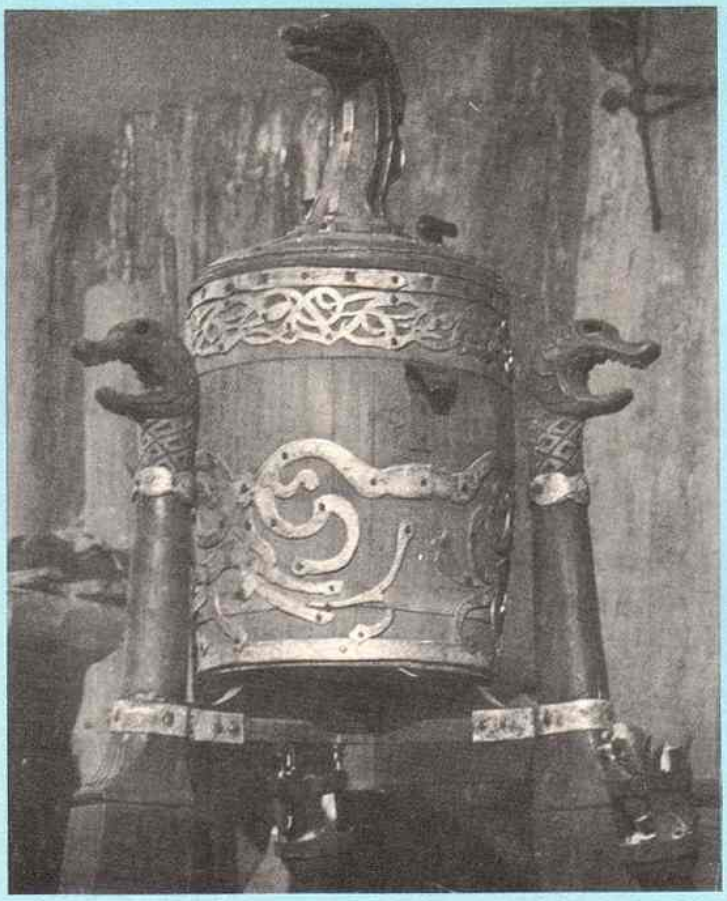


Bunnett created literally hundreds of storyboard panels in plotting out the film's dragon sequences. Through these sketches, the trio came to realize that to create the most effective illusion of a real dragon, they would have to use a wide variety of techniques. Thanks to this foresight, the Vermithrax you see on screen is really a composite of several different forms. There are full-scale mobile parts weighing tons which are operated on the set during shoot-









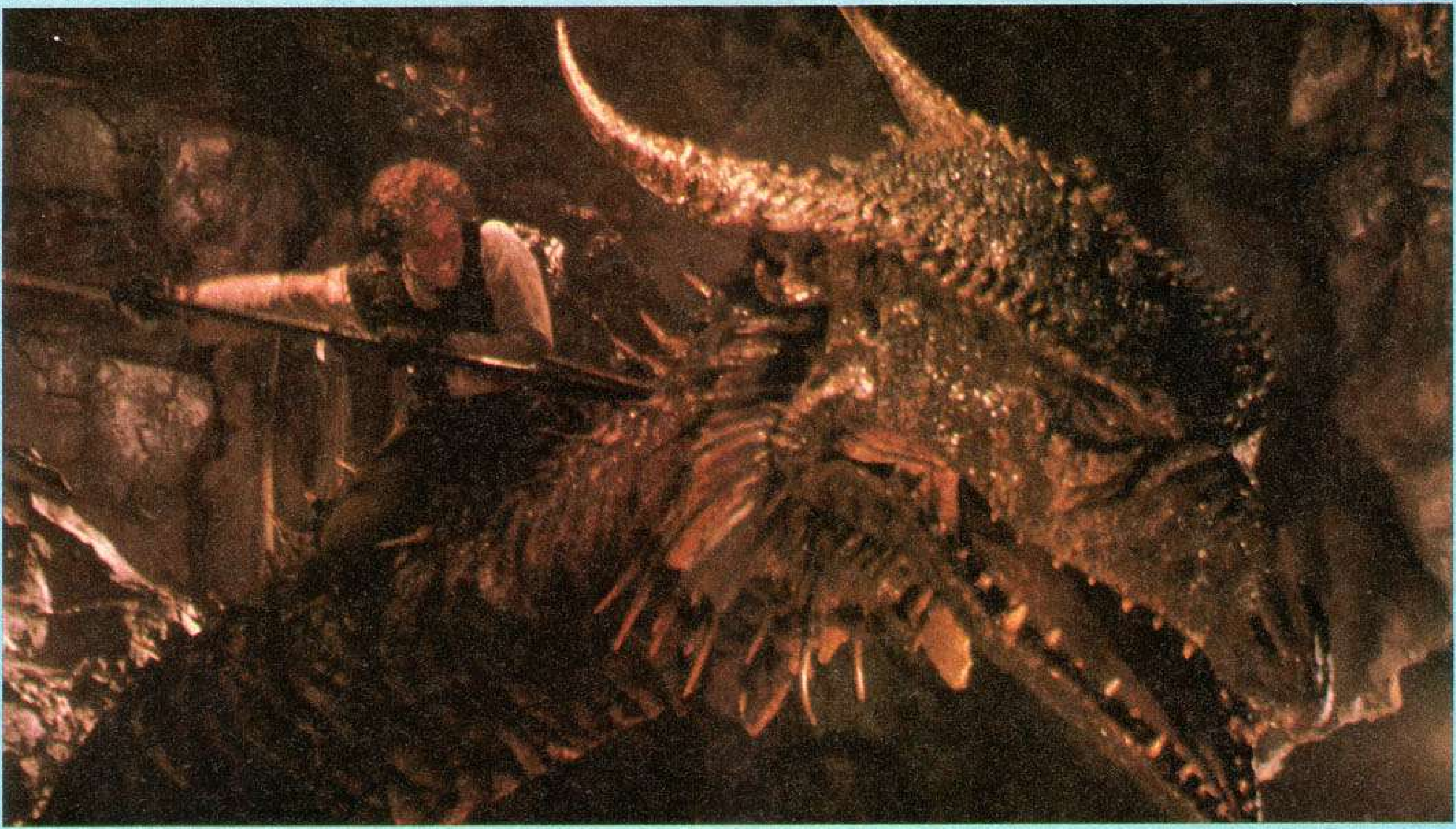
ing and there are miniatures weighing but a few ounces. There are flying dragons, walking dragons, fire-breathing dragons, dragons for riding, dragons for expressing emotions, dragon heads, a claw, a tail and a wing. All these to portray the various aspects of what will be perceived as one monster — Vermithrax.

Bunnett's sketches and storyboards were handed over to the film's gifted technical crew. The huge dragon props were constructed by the Disney Studios' special effects group under the supervision of Danny Lee, who had done the effects on many films including ***The Love Bug, The Black Hole*** (for which he was nominated for an Oscar) and ***Pete's Dragon.*** ("No relation to Vermithrax," quips Lee with a grin.)

Phil Tippett (of George Lucas' *very* special effects facility, Industrial Light & Magic), who did the detailed final design on the dragon, sculpted a model which Lee's staff followed in their work. Two months later, they had built the required sections which would serve to symbolize it in close-up — a sixteen foot head and neck assembly; a twenty foot slashing and bending tail; thighs, and legs; claws that could grasp a human; and a membranous thirty foot wide wing sec-

tion. When they were finished, the sections flew across the Atlantic — not under their own power, but in the cargo hold of a 747 — and were installed in the dragon's-lair set which took up several huge soundstages at Pinewood Studios just outside London.

The next step in the excruciatingly careful work done to create the dragon illusion was left to England's Brian Johnson. Johnson, who has received Academy Awards for his special effects work in ***Alien*** and ***The Empire Strikes Back***, was aboard here as ***Dragonslayer's*** Supervisor of Special Effects. While Lee and his people were constructing the dragon parts, Johnson and Co. began work. The ILM crew included Dennis Muren, an effects cameraman on ***Star Wars*** and ***Close Encounters of the Third Kind*** and Effects Director of Photography on ***Empire***, as supervisor of Special Photographic Effects; Bruce Nicholson, in charge of opticals on both ***Star Wars*** and ***Empire***, as Supervisor of Optical Photography; and Tippett and Ken Ralston, both veterans of ***Star Wars*** and ***Empire*** as dragon specialists. They began planning both on-set effects (those that need only to be filmed as they are executed and require no special photography) as well as the scenes which required the elaborate blue-screen matting system (which enabled them to shoot several events on several pieces of film, then put them all together to create the illusion of objects existing in or passing through areas different from the ones they actually do) for combining separately shot effects with live action. "We had to get the actors into locations which didn't exist outside of our imaginations," explains Barwood. "Brian's blue-screen allowed us to photograph the actors on a stage in London, knowing that Bruce Nicholson's optical techniques could then transport them anywhere."



"When Matthew and Hal brought us in on Dragonslayer, we knew the dragon had a lot more importance to this film than some of the incidental things that appeared in only a few shots in ***Star Wars*** or ***The Empire Strikes Back***," says Muren. "The dragon had to be presented in such a way that the audience would be absolutely stunned. For ILM, out of that came the need of finding a new way to move it with our own developing technology." They looked in a lot of different places — and found a lot of different answers.

Brian Johnson concurs: "The moment you pick things that are not available in reality — i.e. dragons — you know somewhere along the line something's got to happen to make things appear on the screen... The dragon, by virture of the fact that it weighed over two tons, caused us problems. It was extremely effective from the master shots and at mid-distance, but not for small incremental moves. But the problem was far from insoluble, knowing we could come back to ILM, and the bits that we didn't get would be done on a more manageable scale." What Brian Johnson considers manageable, of course, is nothing short of mind-boggling to us mere mortals.

When the principle shooting was completed, the focus of attention shifted to ILM's northern California headquarters where a special effects crew of eighty people worked for eight months to produce the staggering total of 160 composite shots of the dragon, shots which would account for a mere quarter hour of screen time but were the film's heart and soul.

Chris Walas, who created special effects for ***Scanners*** and special make-up for ***Raiders Of The Lost Ark***, sculpted and operated the dragon head used for detailed close-up work. The monster is made to move by an amazing combination of radio controls, cable controls, air bladders, levers, and Walas' own arm. The master technician and his four assistants were able to give the illusion of a fully co-ordinated face with a wide

range of expression. The only expression Vermithrax is incapable of is a smile. But then, he's not the smiling type anyway.

ILM constructed another model for scenes of the dragon walking. Tippett, who brought ***The Empire Strikes Back's*** Taun-Tauns and Imperial Walkers to life and — with colleague John Berg — created the unique chess game played in ***Star Wars,*** was given the task of making believable the walk of a grotesquerie whose winged legs and ponderous gait made the job one beyond the capabilities of previously utilized technologies. Tippett's ***Empire*** achievements combined stop-motion animation with modern digital electronics but he felt that the technique had to be made even better for a film where the animated character is such a *central* part of the story. "We had to carry the method further for the dragon," reasons Tippett. "We felt that current audiences just wouldn't buy a dragon with the jerky look of an old stop-motion movie. We wanted to try to do something that had never really been seen before and that looked more alive than anything previously [done had]..."

To do this, Stuart Ziff and Gary Leo constructed a device to Tippett's prescription, a machine that became known as "The Dragon Mover." It is a dragon model which uses sixteen stepping motors for muscles and has a computer brain. Sets and blue screen mattes are repositioned for each shot and Tippett programs the various dragon movements into the computer which then shoots the scene a frame at a time. The dragon model is made to move *during* (not in-between, as is conventional) each exposure. This records on the film an image *in motion* as a real creature would move. This process eliminates the jerkiness of motion so evident in stop-action animated films such as ***King Kong*** where the subject is moved in-between the shooting of each frame and the subject in motion is never recorded. It is conveying that sense of being in motion within each frame that is Tippett's achievement. "We don't know how to describe what we're doing. No one has ever done it before. Maybe," grins Tippett, "we should call it *Go-Motion*!"

And so the dragon's frightening walking style was developed. But Barwood and Robbins' original concept called for a dragon that could fly as magnificently as it hideously walked. Ken Ralston was the ILM expert assigned to make it do just that. Ralston — who also worked on ***Star Wars*** and ***Empire*** — and Tom St. Amand — who helped construct the puppets used in ***Empire*** — gave their model of Vermithrax an actual skeleton (made of precision machined aluminum) to make its flights that much more credible. Ralston shot film of birds to see exactly how they flew, then set out to emulate that ease of motion they exhibited.

As with the walking dragon, a computer controls the shots involving the flying model. Ralston programs the camera to track in and out, tilt and drift, and in general to convey the sensation of flight. Given its orders, the computer makes the shot, moving the dragon *during* each exposure in the same manner that the walking dragon is moved, to simulate real movement.



Johnson and the ILM crew make you believe you are seeing the dragon fly, breathe flame, grab a sacrificial Urland Virgin, struggle to dislodge Galen's lance from its neck, and caress its young. Barwood and Robbins are ecstatic over the job their creative technical team has done of bringing Vermithrax to life. The crew has produced, believes Barwood, an opportunity for "...a very close inspection of an amazing beast that walks like a spider, flies like an eagle and breathes fire like a flamethrower. Viewers will get their money's worth."

Which has to be the understatement of the year. •

NO LAND IS AN URLAND

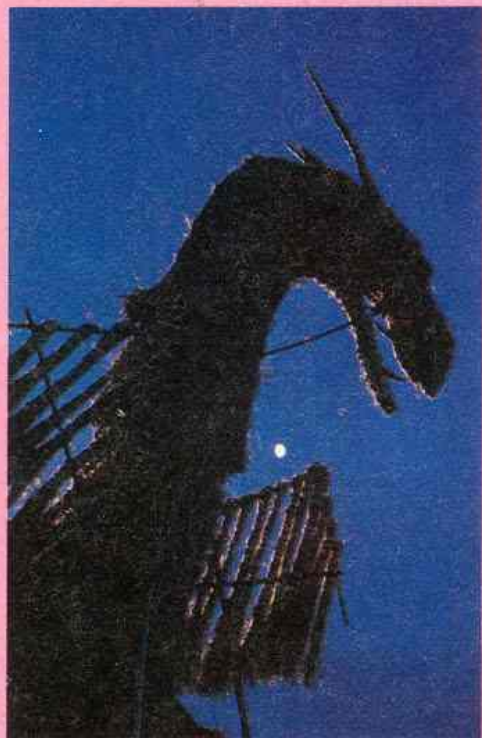
The Creation of the World of Dragonslayer

by Danny Fingeroth

Vermithrax, though the most spectacular part of ***Dragonslayer's*** world of illusion, is nothing without the mythical world in which it exists. And ***Dragonslayer's*** crew did an extraordinary job of creating the world and the mood called for by co-creators Barwood and Robbins. Take for instance, the work of cameraman Derek Vanlint. Vanlint is an internationally acclaimed photographer who knocked the movie industry on its collective ear with his magnificent photography on ***Alien,*** his first major feature film. The eerie lighting he provides on ***Dragonslayer*** sets the perfect tone for the story, casting a powerful, brooding mood over interiors and exteriors alike.

Elliott Scott, long one of the world's most respected figures in the field of production design, also worked overtime on this labor of love. He had the awesomely challenging task of designing an entire sixth century world for the film's protagonists to act their drama out upon. To the astonishment of the locals at Dragonslayer's Welsh locations, he temporarily converted their familiar thirteenth century Dolwyddelan Castle into Ulrich's ramshackle sixth century abode. Scott then proceeded to fabricate the entire village of Swanscombe on a farmsite outside of London. Researched in the British Museum and in his own extensive reference library, Scott created the village "within the bounds of documented fact and scholarly surmise," but proudly admits that a great deal of imagination went into creating the thatched roof houses, the granary, Valerian's father's house and smithy, the interior of Ulrich's abode and the castle of the King of Urland. "There simply isn't sufficient documented evidence to show exactly how they should look," he says. Scott is especially proud of the dragon's lair he created. It took 25,000 cubic feet of expanded polystyrene and forty tons of Welsh slate and shale to construct the set. Scott's Lake of Fire is a breathtaking vision of stalactites and stalagmites surrounding Brian Johnson's flaming pool.







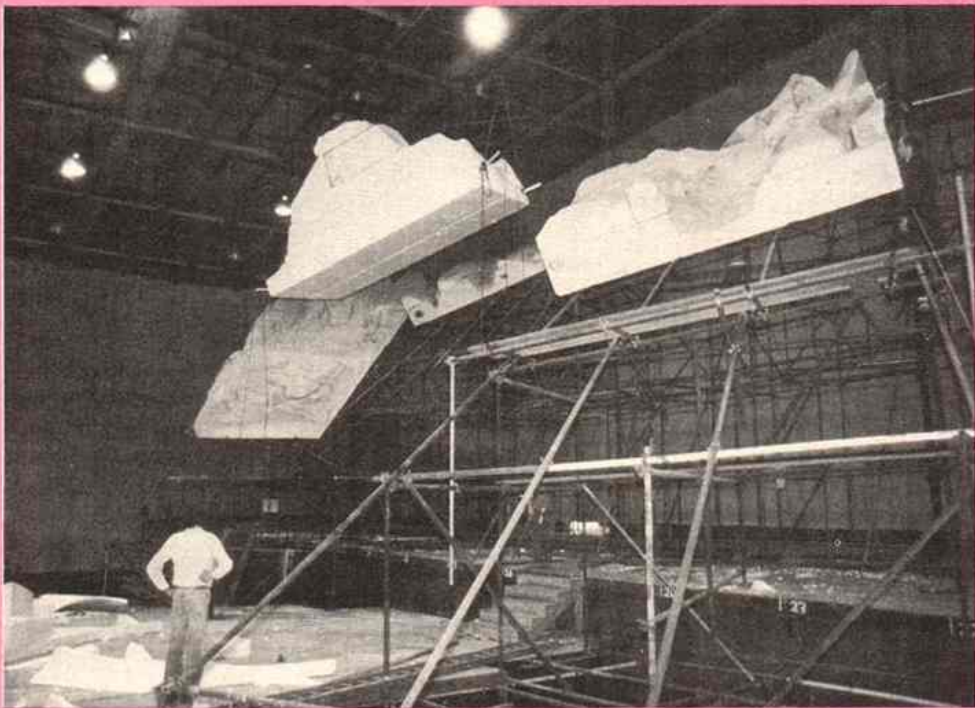


The sense of ***Dragonslayer***'s mythical world is further enhanced by the (hopefully unnoticed) profusion of matte paintings. These paintings are done on pieces of glass which are shot separately from the film's live or motion-controlled action and then combined with that footage — on the optical printer — to extend the Welsh and Scottish landscapes used in the film. The three dozen glass mattes are the products of three dedicated professionals. Alan Maley, one of the masters of this "dying art," passed on his vast store of knowledge to his eager young assistants, Chris Evans and Mike Pangrazio. Not only have these three added immeasurably to the legend of Urland, but they have also ensured that the art of glass matte painting will live on.

And what would an historical epic be without appropriate costuming? Luckily, the makers of ***Dragonslayer*** never had to ask themselves that question, for they were blessed with the costume design of Anthony Mendleson. Mendleson consulted the British Museum, the London Library and his own reference files to come up with the movie's fabulous designs. Mendelson strove for a sense of the early middle ages — and he achieved it. From jewelry to armor, to the dyes and quality of the fabrics which comprise the costumes, Mendelson's eye for exactitude is in evidence. Stitching is rough and can be seen (as was true of garments of the era), colors are muted and the only ones employed are those which would have been made possible by the vegetable dyes then in use. Fabrics are coarsely woven and often dirty, with the exception of the fine silks worn by the King and members of his court. Much animal skin and fur is also used, as would have been natural in the Dark Ages.

From initial concept to the final most minute stages of its execution, ***Dragonslayer*** is a film that was cared about — by its director/producer writers, by its actors, and by its dedicated crew. That kind of caring is a rarity not only in the film industry, but just about anywhere. It's that caring which makes ***Dragonslayer*** special. ●

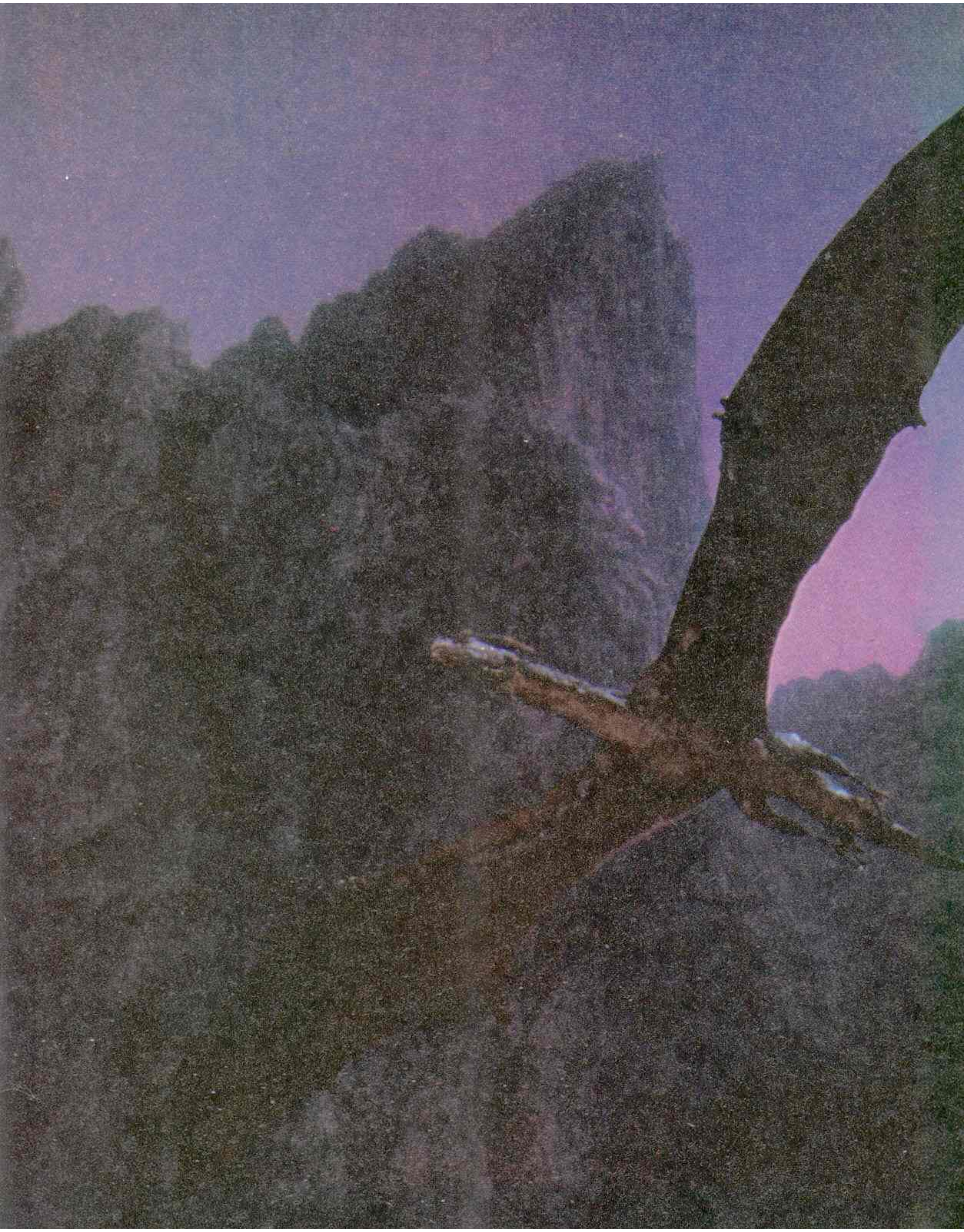














The fruit of the labors of *Dragonslayer's* dedicated crew.



PETER MacNICOL

"I hated magic when I was a kid," recalls Texas born Peter MacNicol who so convincingly plays ***Dragonslayer***'s young sorcerer's apprentice, Galen. "It's so frustrating not being able to follow something that is obviously happening in front of your eyes."

But Peter's early disdain for sleight-of-hand did not prevent him from becoming obsessed with other forms of magic—the magic bond between an audience and a performer, the magic of a well-written piece of drama, and the magic we deceptively refer to as the technology of filmmaking. The love of that sort of magic has been with him since very early on.

Peter was born in Dallas, Texas, one of five children of an Episcopalian minister and his wife. In grade school in that city, Peter made his first stage appearance in the role of Louis Pasteur,

tending to the wounds of a village boy who had been bitten by a dog. "The kid brought his own dog who started to chase me across the stage." Peter remembers. "I ad libbed my way out of that and got a tremendous response from the audience. I remember saying to myself, 'Well, this is it, this is what you're going to do when you're grown up!'"

As a schoolboy in Dallas, Peter relentlessly pursued his muse. "I was in everything. Christmas plays, end-of-the-term concerts—you name it, I was in it." Peter's greatest challenge in those years came when he had to play a statue, staying stock still on stage for what seemed an eternity. "They dusted me with some kind of powder to make me look like a statue," he recalls with a chuckle, "and at a certain point in the play I had to come to life and walk down the aisle of the hall. As I moved, all the powder started coming off. All the old ladies in the front row must have had respiratory problems, because you've never heard such a chorus of coughs and sneezes in your life as when I walked by!"

Peter had fleeting affairs with paleontology ("At one point my room was littered with fossilized shellfish and dubious items variously labelled 'old,' 'probably older,' or 'swam in ancient seas.'") and art (self-portraits in various dramatic roles). He emceed talent shows, wrote sketches for fund-raising concerts for the football team, and developed an interest in athletics, most notably horsemanship. But it became obvious that all these interests took a secondary (if contributing) position to his greatest passion, show business.

After graduating high school, Peter studied drama at the American University in Rome, among other schools. Returning from Europe, he landed his first professional job as an actor at the Cricket Theatre in Minneapolis, an adventurous young company whose bold experimental work was beginning to attract considerable notice. From there it was on to a two-year engagement with Minneapolis' world-renowned Guthrie Theatre, which got Peter noticed by a New York talent agent who arranged for the young man to be tested for the pilot film of ***Breaking Away.*** While waiting for that audition he met ***Dragonslayer*** director Matthew Robbins who insisted Peter read for the role of Galen. Robbins had a fairly easy job convincing producer and co-writer Hal Barwood and the studio heads that Peter was right for the part, and soon the Texan was being trained for his role in the exacting film

There were grueling hours of learning to ride a horse, both English Style and bareback, which his familiarity with horses make at least a *little* easier—but not much. "They took away my stirrups, they took away my reins and whipped the horse, and then they told me to windmill my arms and turn a complete circle in the saddle. Then they took away the saddle!"

Beside equine artistry, Peter also had to take some lessons with a vocal coach (no drawls for sorcerers' apprentices, y'know) and get an instant education in magic. The latter was supplied by top British prestidigitator Harold Taylor who has often performed for the Royal Family. Studying with Taylor cured Peter of his childhood disdain for sleight-of-hand. He even entertained himself and the film's cast and crew during the inevitable delays in shooting with the minor miracles he would perform. And he delights us all with the magic he brings to his role as Galen. ●

CAITLIN CLARKE

The acting bug first bit Caitlin Clarke when, as a seventeen year old student on a three week trip to London, she discovered the Old Vic Theatre and the acting of Frank Finlay and Lawrence Olivier. She spent all her money and all her time going back again and again to watch their performances, seeing a total of seventeen London performances before she reluctantly returned home. It's that kind of dedication that enables her to come across so successfully in her dual role as ***Dragonslayer***'s Valerian — first as Valerian the young man, then as the real, female Valerian.

The oldest of five sisters, Caitlin was born in Pittsburgh, Pa., where she lived until she was about ten. (Her real name, incidentally, is *Catherine* Clarke, but another member of Actors Equity already had that name, so her agent came up with the equally mellifluous Caitlin. Her family and friends call her Kate, anyway, so the new name wasn't too hard to adjust to.) Then her father, a doctor, moved the family to the little Ohio River town of Sewickly. Caitlin attended prep school and high school there before going on to Mount Holyoake College. Inspired by her experience in London, she auditioned and was accepted for a school musical during her first year at Holyoake. She enjoyed being in that play so much that she started taking drama courses and — at her family's suggestion — took up acting as a major.

After graduation from Mount Holyoake, where she played a wide variety of roles, and a year of summer stock and local theatre roles in Pittsburgh, Caitlin decided to continue her studies at Yale. "They had playwrights," she explains, "and I wanted to do new plays. In the United States, all the theatrical tradition there is has been borrowed from Europe. There has never been any real American Theatre and I saw the possibility of it developing at Yale."

To her disappointment, Caitlin didn't get to work with Yale's new playwrights too much. "In my second year I finally did a new play and during my third year I got to work with the Rep, the professional company attached to the school. The exposure and the professional pressure were good for me," she recalls. She took over for Carol Kane in ***Tales From the Vienna Woods***, when Kane left to do a film and was given a tremendous ego-boost by a surprise backstage visit from the great Stella Adler. At Yale, Caitlin played everything from Alcestis to Hedda Gabler and in one term alone played roles in seventeen different plays.

Graduating Yale, Caitlin moved to New York where her first professional job was as an understudy in a production put on by Joseph Papp's Shakespeare Theatre. In New York she acted with Papp's troupe and others and even did a stint as a song-and-dance specialist on the Apple's cabaret circuit.

Just before leaving to begin work on a new play in Chicago, Caitlin almost incidentally auditioned for ***Dragonslayer***. "I almost didn't go, I was so tired and overworked," she recalls, "but my agent insisted, so I went, did a tape of some of the script, got on the plane and forgot about it, I was so immersed in the play."

The film's producers didn't forget Caitlin, though, and she was called back for some more tests. Unfortunately, she failed them. But director and co-writer Matthew Robbins sensed a spark in the girl and insisted she be re-tested. The second test *did* go much better for Caitlin, and the other decision makers saw Robbins' point. Caitlin got the role. Says Caitlin of her good fortune: "Sometimes I just pinch myself to see if it can really be true. Not only do I have my first film, but I'm in London, too. I remember the thing that made the biggest impression on Peter and me at the first screen test was seeing our chairs at the side of the set with our names on them. Stupid, I know, but we went into those tests asking each other whatever would happen to the chairs if we didn't get the parts."

Fortunately for Caitlin — and the rest of us — that's a question which will forever go unanswered. ●

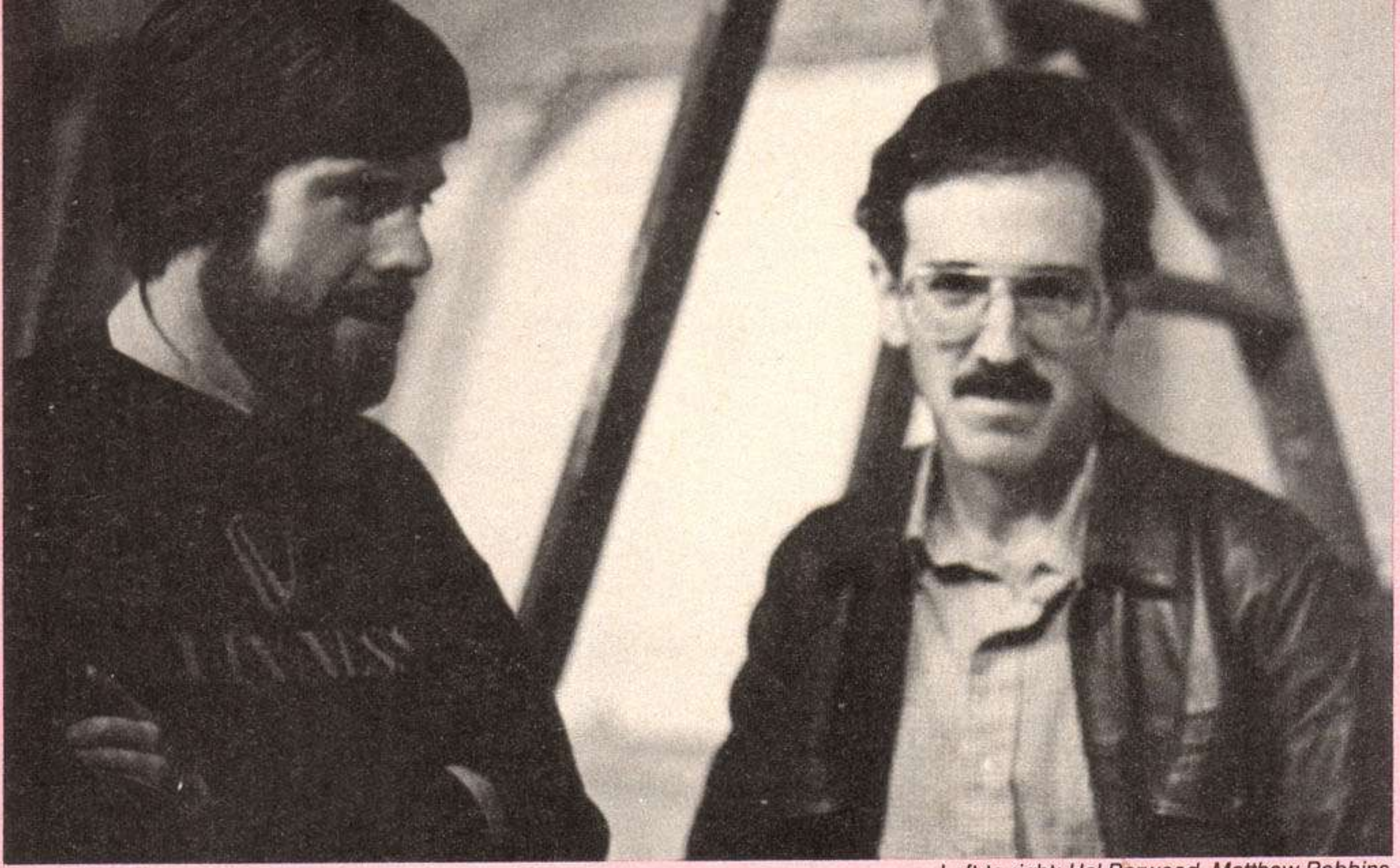


SIR RALPH RICHARDSON

While Ralph Richardson was made a knight in 1974, adding the title "Sir" to his name, it is not as a lance-wielding, armored champion that he appears in ***Dragonslayer***, but as the elderly enchanter, Ulrich. For Richardson, it is the latest achievement in an incredible acting career that began sixty years ago when, at the age of nineteen, he played his first professional role—that of Lorenzo in Shakespeare's ***Merchant Of Venice***—for the Charles Doran Theater Company in Lowestoft. In the decades since, Sir Ralph has played a multitude of Shakespearean roles, mostly with London's legendary Old Vic Company with which he has been associated since 1930 (and of which he was joint director from 1944 through 1948). He has graced us with his interpretation of the whole gamut of the Bard's immortal characters, including Caliban, Bolingbroke, Othello, Iago, Henry V, Sir John Falstaff, John of Gaunt, and Timon of Athens. He has also been closely and productively associated with London's Haymarket Theatre since 1926, stealing the show in such projects as ***Yellow Sands, The Amazing Doctor Clitterhouse, The School For Scandal, You Never Can Tell,*** and ***The Rivals.*** In more recent years, the dean of British theatre has appeared at the Royal Court Theatre in London in ***Jack At Home***, later moving with the play to New York's Morosco Theatre; has starred in ***Lloyd George Knew My Father***, which toured Australia and the U.S. as well as Britain; played the title role in the British National Theatre's ***John Gabriel Borkman***; and—less than a week before beginning his role as Ulrich—completed his stint in the Lindsey Anderson-directed production of David Story's ***Early Days.*** This impressive list is just the tip of the iceberg of Sir Ralph's stage credits.

Most Americans are probably more familiar with Sir Ralph's equally prolific film career, which began in 1932 when he made his screen debut in ***The Ghoul.*** Since then he has appeared in over fifty feature films, among them ***Anna Karenina, Richard III, Our Man In Havana, Exodus, Woman Of Straw, Doctor Zhivago, Khartoum, Oh! What A Lovely War, The Looking Glass War, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, O Lucky Man,*** and ***Rollerball.*** If you've seen even a few of these films, then you have an idea of the versatility of the man's talents. In ***Dragonslayer*** he brings all his years of experience to bear and creates a wizard who, for all his faults—indeed, perhaps *because* of them—is real and who we care about.

During the filming of ***Dragonslayer***, Caitlin Clarke observed that, "Sir Ralph taught me more in one rehearsal than I learned in acting classes in years." When you watch Ralph Richardson on screen, you are watching an actor's actor, one whom others repsect and emulate and one who has tackled—and triumphed in—some of the toughest roles in classic and modern drama. ●



Left-to-right: *Hal Barwood, Matthew Robbins.*

HAL BARWOOD & MATTHEW ROBBINS

Dragonslayer is the fourteenth screenplay to emerge from the corporate typewriter of the film's producer, Hal Barwood, and its director, Matthew Robbins. The two met over a decade ago at the celebrated University of Southern California film school (where one of their friends and classmates was George Lucas). They later started co-authoring screenplays while working together on TV commercials. Their first successful screenplay was for ***The Sugarland Express***, a film directed by Steven Spielberg which took the Best Screenplay honors at the Cannes Film Festival. After that came screenplays for ***MacArthur*** and ***The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars and Motor Kings***, which starred Richard Pryor and James Earl Jones.

But exciting as screenwriting may be, Barwood and Robbins always longed for the satisfaction that would come from making their own films. Their dream was finally realized two years ago with ***Corvette Summer***, written by the talented pair and backed by MGM, with Barwood producing and Robbins directing.

Their next project, a romantic comedy called ***Continental Divide***, never entered production because the major stars it called for were either unavailable or uninterested. That situation led the team to make a crucial decision. "We felt we ought to come up with a film where we could literally build the star out of rubber and plastic, that's how frustrated we were," recall Barwood and Robbins.

"We have always been fascinated by science fiction, fantasy, and horror," they say. They felt the time was right for a large scale fantasy subject. "We had watched the renaissance of science fiction and thought we might be able to adapt modern special effects technology to a story-telling venue we liked better. Hanging around a movie set reminds you that all movies are a kind of magic—sleight-of-hand that allows the crude work you do in production to transform itself on screen into a coherent whole. So we thought: 'Why not make a movie about magic itself?'"

"The origins of Dragonslayer are in the *Sorcerer's Apprentice* sequence from ***Fantasia***," continues Barwood. "We were both raised on Disney films and never got over them. Eventually we got curious about St. George and the Dragon. Everybody has heard of the legendary pair—pubs all over England are named after them—but few know the actual story. Neither did we, but when we completed our deep-think research in the children's library, we had our movie.

"The important thing to remember is that the only way to make a convincing fantasy is to achieve the illusion of reality. For ***Dragonslayer,*** we rejected traditional medieval conceptions—our film has no knights in shining armor, no pennants streaming in the breeze, no delicate ladies with diaphanous veils waving from turreted castles, no courtly love, no holy grail.

"Instead, we set out to create a very strange world with a lot of weird values and customs, steeped in superstition, where the clothes and manners of the people were rough, their homes and villages primitive and their countryside almost primeval, so that the idea of magic would be a natural part of their existence. For this reason we chose Britain during the dark ages, after the Romans had left and before Christianity arrived."

The Barwood-Robbins team began work on the story outline of ***Dragonslayer*** on June 25, 1979, worked at breakneck speed to finish it by the beginning of August and took it to "every studio and film financing organization in Hollywood." Because they were inexperienced in negotiations involving the sums of money the film required, they received—they freely admit—numerous refusals. Says Barwood: "Many groups didn't think it would be a good commercial proposition. . . others were just plain reluctant to trust us with that kind of money with so little production experience under our belts.

"Paramount, on the other hand, was looking for this kind of movie. When they saw ours, they thought it would work and got very excited." Walt Disney Productions concurred and the film became the second the two studios collaborated on (the first being ***Popeye***).

And so Barwood and Robbins got their wish—near total creative control over a film—and all the joys and headaches that go with such responsibility. They assembled the finest actors, set designers, special effects team and editing staff they could and began the two years of grueling work the film required. It was exhausting for all involved, but Barwood and Robbins believe it was worth it. If you've seen ***Dragonslayer***, then you *know* it was. Well done, Mssrs. Barwood and Robbins. ●





